RELIGION AND MORALITY IN THE THOUGHT OF EMIL BRUNNER

by

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SUMMARY

In this dissertation I engage in a critical analysis of Emil Brunner's view of the relation of religion and morality on three levels. On the level of the moral life, I examine what Brunner says and assumes about the connection of religious and moral experience. Christian faith produces a loving disposition which, according to the logic of motivational analysis, should issue in loving acts toward other men. But because of Brunner's preoccupation with personalistic "I-Thou" relations, he tends to emphasize "showing love" at the expense of "doing" loving acts, though he does not completely ignore the necessity for external action.

The immediacy of the connection of religion and morality is symbolized by the notion of the concrete command of God in each situation of moral choice. The particularity of the command does not, however, eliminate the legitimacy of systematic ethical reflection in preparing for the moment of the command. I examine Brunner's ethical theory by observing his way of connecting theological ideas and ethical ideas. The dichotomy in his doctrine of God between God the Creator and God the Redeemer results in unresolved conflicts within his system, especially between love and the orders of creation. When this doctrine of God is combined with the philosophy of personalism, a tendency develops toward an exaltation of personal ethics and a depreciation of external action in the social sphere, combined with a pessimistic outlook concerning the possibility for social reform.

Brunner's view of the inseparability of "true" morality and religion is clearly evident in his treatment of the range and limits of the natural morality of the non-Christian. In his "ethic of the orders," Brunner allows for considerable natural moral knowledge of the external requirements of God's will, especially regarding social issues; but natural morality never moves beyond the stage of legalism. In that aspect of his thought that I call his "ethic of Christian civilization," he tends to interpret the moral knowledge of the nonbeliever as resulting from the indirect influence of Christian values. Neither account gives due credit to the capabilities of natural men.

Finally, I raise the question on the metaethical level whether the claims on the other two levels can be rationally justified. Having begun with a philosophical framework, I conclude that the theologian should not insist upon the logical dependence of morality upon religion; but I argue that it is feasible to develop a theological metaethic along the lines of Brunner's understanding of the nature of Christian commitment and his theological view that God is the presupposition of moral value and the source of man's responsibility.

ABBREVIATIONS

CC, I	*Christianity and Civilization*, Vol. I, 1948
CC, II	*Christianity and Civilization*, Vol. II, 1949
CCC	*Communism, Capitalism and Christianity*, 1948; E.T., 1949
CNSO	*The Church in the New Social Order*, 1952
COG	*The Church and the Oxford Group*, 1936; E.T., 1949
D, I	*Dogmatics, Vol. I: The Christian Doctrine of God*, 1946; E.T., 1950
D, II	*Dogmatics, Vol. II: The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption*, 1950; E.T., 1952
D, III	*Dogmatics, Vol. III: The Christian Doctrine of the Church, Faith, and the Consummation*, 1960; E.T., 1962
DI	*The Divine Imperative*, 1932; E.T., 1947
GE	*Das Grundproblem der Ethik*, 1931
JSO	*Justice and the Social Order*, 1943; E.T., 1945
KPK	*Der Kapitalismus als Problem der Kirche*, 1945
M	*The Mediator*, 1927; E.T., 1947
MR	*Man in Revolt*, 1937; E.T., 1947
NG	*Nature and Grace*, 1934; E.T., 1946
OF	*Our Faith*, 1935; E.T., 1936
PR	*The Philosophy of Religion from the Standpoint of Protestant Theology*, 1927; E.T., 1937
RR	*Revelation and Reason*, 1941; E.T., 1946
TC	*The Theology of Crisis*, 1929
TE	*Truth as Encounter*, 1938; E.T., 1943; 2nd ed., 1963; E.T., 1964
TEB	*The Theology of Emil Brunner*, 1962

PREFACE

In this dissertation I will undertake a critical analysis of Emil Brunner's view of the relation of religion and morality. The study involves an examination of what Brunner says and assumes about the connection of religious and moral experience and about the relation of theological ideas to ethical ideas; it further raises the question of the justification of this connection between religion and morality.

The general question of the relation of religion and morality is currently enjoying a degree of interest in philosophical and theological circles. It is certainly a question which lies at the heart of the question of the relation of philosophical and theological ethics. Brunner's theological ethic exemplifies one way in which this relation may be conceived, and a study of his thought offers the opportunity to open up some of the broader issues of the question.

However, I shall not attempt to deal extensively with the philosophical and theological questions which are raised peripherally. I intend rather to engage chiefly in the interpretation and criticism of Brunner's ethic as it relates to this central question. Since the question of the relation of religion and morality is such a central one in Brunner's own thinking, an examination of that question will involve us to some extent in a critical analysis of his general ethical theory.

It would be useful to compare Brunner's treatment of the issues that I shall raise with the views of other theologians, but such an extended analysis has been impossible within the scope of the present study. It has likewise proved impossible to deal with the philosophical and theological issues which lie at the boundaries of this study.

Whatever merit this dissertation may possess as a contribution to the interpretation of Brunner and to the advancement of the philosophical and theological debate concerning the relation of religion and morality must be credited in large part to the professors who have guided my graduate training at Yale. I would like to express a special word of appreciation to Mr. James M. Gustafson for his part in my academic preparation and for that personal interest in the student which characterizes his teaching. I am particularly grateful for his interest in my dissertation project and for the valuable guidance he has provided. Likewise, I should like to acknowledge my indebtedness to my dissertation advisor, Mr. Eugene A. TeSelle, for his untiring direction and valuable suggestions. The patience with which he has followed each step in the writing, the thoroughness with which he has commented on the materials that I submitted, and the constructiveness of his criticisms have certainly contributed significantly to the final product.

In a more general way I would like to thank my parents and my grandmother for their unfailing encouragement throughout my academic career. But most of all, I would express my deepest appreciation to my wife, Donna, to whom I dedicate this effort, for simply being herself and for creating those pleasant distractions that have kept our lives human in spite of the rigors of a graduate program. I am most recently indebted to her for her invaluable assistance in the preparation of the final manuscript. Finally, I should like to express my appreciation to Oscar Santucho for his friendship, for his encouragement, and for his counsel on matters of style and form.

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CHAPTER I

FAITH AND THE MORAL LIFE

The purpose of this dissertation is to examine the many faceted problem of the relation of religion and morality in the ethical thought of Emil Brunner. The problems which I wish to consider in this study can be organized around three foci. I shall refer to these foci as the "levels" of the moral life. The notion of levels of morality is a familiar concept among ethicists, associated most notably with Henry David Aiken among the philosophers[1] and applied to Christian ethics by James M. Gustafson.[2] We must be careful when we employ the concept of levels, since the idea could be misleading if it is construed as implying a strict logical hierarchy with clearly defined lines of demarcation between the levels. But the notion is a helpful one, provided that we use it without being restricted by it. Although I will employ the terminology of levels of the moral life, I will not treat the categories in exactly the same manner as either Aiken or Gustafson; rather, I will seek to adapt the idea of levels of morality to accommodate the logic of Brunner's ethic.

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[1] Henry David Aiken, Reason and Conduct: New Bearings in Moral Philosophy (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1962), pp. 65-87

[2] James M. Gustafson, "Theology and Ethics," The Scope of Theology, ed. Daniel T. Jenkins (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1965), pp. 111-32.

The fundamental level of the moral life which I wish to examine is that of commitment, decision, and action; I shall refer to it as the "moral" level. The theoretical discipline of ethics, the systematic reflection on questions of moral value and moral obligation for the purpose of guiding human moral decision, I shall call the "ethical" level. These two levels taken together constitute the area normally designated as "normative" ethics; they are both concerned, though in different ways, with what the moral agent is and what he ought to be and do. The third level, for which I will use the accepted technical term "metaethical," moves beyond the normative and raises questions about the nature and meaning of ethical terms and about the justification of the basic claims made on the other levels. I will devote the major portion of the dissertation to an examination of the moral and ethical levels. The metaethical level is one of considerable importance in my study, but I will postpone the treatment of that level until the last chapter.

Dividing normative ethics into the moral and ethical levels seems to present little difficulty in principle. The experiential or existential moral reality, the stuff of which the moral life is made, seems clearly distinguishable from the systematic reflection upon that moral life, reflection which is intended to inform and instruct the decisions and actions which occur on the moral level. Brunner himself suggests something like this division in distinguishing between a "theory of ethics" and the "moral actuality itself" (DI, 19). Drawing this line may prove more difficult and confusing in practice, for at least two reasons. The first source of possible confusion involves a procedural difficulty. The question is how to keep reflective ethics separate from the moral actuality in a study which is by its nature reflective. We must admit from the start that an examination like the present one is an exercise in ethical reflection. But the point is that the subject matter is "moral"; in this case, the subject matter is Brunner's description of the Christian moral life.

The second problem involves the unavoidable ambiguity of the phrase "systematic reflection." Not all reflection about what I ought to do is ethical reflection. The moral level as I have described it is the level on which men make decisions about specific courses of action and then act upon them. But these decisions seldom occur without the benefit of some kind of reflection; they are rarely purely instinctive reactions. Indeed, strictly speaking, we would not consider an instinctive reaction or a conditioned response to be a "decision," since decision implies the element of conscious thought. To be sure, we do perform some actions with little or no thought, and some of these may be moral actions, since we may still be "responsible" even for inadvertent and negligent actions; but even so we would not speak of such actions as springing from moral "decision."

Moral decisions, then, do require reflection, but the reflection that takes place on this level is not systematic, or "scientific," as Brunner would say (DI, 34), and it may or may not be informed by systematic ethical reflection.[1] Thus we could differentiate between reflective morality and ethical theory. But if ethical reflection and moral reflection are distinguished by the systematic nature of the former, then locating the dividing line is complicated by the ambiguity of the word "systematic."[2] Brunner calls attention to the difference between the level of systematic reflection about the will of God and the level of the "daily life of the Christian in his environment" (D, II, 321); and he insists on distinguishing preparatory ethical reflection, which lays the foundation for decision without anticipating it (DI, 132), from the concrete moment of decision in which one "hears the Command of God" and obeys (DI, 91). But how can we know exactly where preparation ends and decision begins? This question indicates the difficulty of any precise and absolute division between ethics and morality.[1]

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[1] We normally think about decision in terms of a decision on the moral level to perform or not to perform a particular action. But we might think of two kinds of decisions. We might speak of an "ethical" decision, which would be a general decision on principle arrived at in the course of ethical reflection, such as "generally speaking one ought not kill," or even a particular textbook "case" of killing or not killing, treated within an ethical system. Likewise, we might speak of a "moral" decision, which would be a decision on a particular course of action, for example, a decision reached by a moral agent in the midst of a situation where he is considering the possibility of a particular instance of killing.

[2] We should note in passing that what distinguishes the ethical from the moral is not merely that ethics is a system, but that it involves systematic reflection. Brunner notes that there can be moral systems, that is, institutionalized patterns of behavior which characterize the life of a people, patterns which exist without the benefit of systematic reflection. Indeed, customs and mores normally do precede ethical reflection and provide the material and the occasion for subsequent critical reflection. Brunner goes so far as to assert that only within the "sphere of civilization determined by Hellenism and Christianity" did ethics in the sense of a systematic discipline develop (DI, 34).

For the purposes of this dissertation, we need not be overly concerned with delimiting precisely the areas occupied by the levels, since the levels are merely artificial organizational tools. Indeed, we should be careful not to permit the analytical distinctions to obscure the organic unity of the moral life. Both morality and ethics have to do with human behavior; ethical reflection is reflection about conduct and is intended to provide guidance for moral action.

Brunner does not elaborate on the importance of the distinction between ethics and morality in terms of its correspondence with his distinction between theology and faith, but it is illuminating to note the parallel. The theological doctrine or dogma which results from reflection on the knowledge of revelation received in faith is always one step removed from faith itself. Dogma merely expresses that aspect of the truth of faith which can be expressed intellectually, but it does not possess the existential reality of faith in which a man finds himself addressed by God (M, 597f). Dogmatics is concerned wholly with right thinking about doctrine, and it is "distinguished from faith as the process of reflection is distinguished from all that is non-reflective and immediate" (D, I, 61, 78). Faith itself is not an assent to statements and doctrines as true, but a knowledge which is at the same time "the most personal experience of the man who has passionately struggled with God and been subdued by Him" (D, III, 177, 191). Dogma attempts to express faith or point toward it, not in order to create faith, but in order to instruct the faithful.

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[1] Even though Brunner acknowledges the difference between ethical theory and moral experience, the distinction is not one of the organizing principles of his ethical writing, nor does he use the words "ethical" and "moral" consistently to refer to the two levels. In common usage we do not often choose carefully between "ethical" and "moral," and we often use the words interchangeably. The decision to use the words in a more clearly defined sense for the purpose of designating two levels of moral life is largely a matter of convenience, although it is in keeping with much philosophical usage.

The same kind of relation holds between a system of theological ethics and the Christian moral life. Ethical reflection, too, is one step removed from the moral life. The purpose of such reflection is to instruct the man of faith regarding his moral behavior, but it does not create morality nor even the will to act morally. Intellectual assent to the proper ethical principles is of no value apart from the moral action of the man of faith. Acceptance of ethical doctrine can never replace moral living. Brunner insists that when we begin to think about the doctrines that underlie theological ethics, instead of submitting ourselves to them, our attitude becomes wrong; it becomes the attitude of a spectator whose relation to them is purely intellectual (M, 600).

Brunner would not argue that only the theologically inclined Christian who is familiar with systematic Christian ethics could live a morally good life, any more than he would hold that only the systematic theologian is a man of faith (D, I, 73). He explicitly says that the Christian can lead a healthy Christian life without reading any book on ethics; and he notes that both theology and ethics have the negative function of clearing away those difficulties that prevent our minds from understanding the Christian message (DI, 10). Thus we can conclude that Christian ethics exists only to aid the church and the Christian in making moral decisions, just as dogmatic theology only exists to serve the church in clarifying its doctrine and thereby to serve the cause of proclamation (D, I, 82-85).

In the next chapter, which deals with the theological and ethical level of the moral life, I shall be considering the connection of theological doctrine and ethical judgments and the theological basis of certain ethical principles. But I am concerned in this chapter with Brunner's conception of the moral life of the Christian; that is, I will be dealing with his description of the "style of life" of the Christian, to use a popular but somewhat ambiguous phrase.

Faith as Morality

The first thing to be said about the relation of religion and morality from Brunner's point of view is that faith is morality. In other words, what is moral about the Christian life is that it is a life of faith. Genuine morality consists in living in a personal relationship with God in faith. As we shall see later, it is not always possible even on the ethical level to distinguish the religious from the moral, but at least it is often possible to distinguish the "indicatives" of theological doctrine from the related "imperatives" of ethics. But on the moral level, separating the religious and the moral is nearly impossible, in Brunner's view, because the "indissoluble connection" between them approaches the point of "absolute identity" (M, 594). To do the good is to do what God wills; but what God wills is faith. Faith is obedience. The moral life is the life of faith. Brunner asserts that where God is known as the ground of all being and his will as the norm of all morality, religion and morality are identical (D, II, 68).

Brunner recognizes, of course, that when he identifies faith and morality he is using ethical terms in a manner radically different from their use in conventional morality. He deliberately refers to such "natural morality" as the "so-called moral," in contrast to his own understanding of "true morality." His point is that only what is done in faith is truly good. We can understand somewhat more clearly Brunner's view of the nature of the relation of religion and morality on the moral level by comparing his description of the man outside of faith with that of the man of faith.

Man in Revolt

According to Brunner, the condition of the man apart from faith is a condition of living in contradiction; that is, his actual existence is a contradiction of his divinely created destiny (D, II, 73, 127).

> Because man is in opposition to his divine origin in the Creation, daily renewing this opposition, he lives in opposition to his own God-given nature; therefore his present nature itself is: contradiction. (MR, 204)

Man was created for a life in personal communion with God and other men. God desired fellowship with some being over against himself, but real fellowship is possible only with beings who have freedom to choose or reject that fellowship (D, II, 13). The plight of humanity is that men individually and collectively have used their freedom to choose not to live in fellowship with God, but have asserted their independence and revolted against God (MR, 141; D, II, 124). The rebellion against God is known in Christian vocabulary as sin, which is essentially resistance and insubordination to the will of the Creator and Lord. The most appalling feature of sin is its rejection of a personal relation with God. Sin is always sin against God. Even when it manifests itself in broken relations with other men, its sinfulness derives from the fact that this violation of human relations is the result and symptom of the rejection of fellowship with God. The sinfulness of injuring another person resides solely in the fact that such injury constitutes disobedience to the will of God (M, 142-47).

The sinful rejection of God is the act of every individual. Not only does every man perform sinful acts; he himself is sinful (M, 142-43).

> The fact that we are sinners means that sin is not only an occasional, perhaps even a frequent act, always arising out of the wrong decision of the moment, but that it is a perverted tendency of our nature. (MR, 145)

But to say that man is a sinner is not to attribute to him a state of being. Sin is always an act, a continuing decision against God, a permanent revolution against him (MR, 147-52). Every act of sin is a fresh decision against God. Moreover, sin is an act of the total person, for it determines a man's whole existence and is not merely an act and determination of the will (M, 138-41). But sin can never be a "total act." Total action is impossible for man, because he is always divided within himself. Only the devil can perform a total act of evil, and only God can perform a total act of good. Even in his sin, man can only act "half-heartedly" (MR, 308).

Man's continuing sinful rejection of God results in man's loss of freedom, since true freedom consists in dependence upon God. In emancipating himself from God, man falsely ascribes to himself an independence which is really "unfreedom" (DI, 153-54). His rebellion against God makes man a slave to sin. Although in principle he is still free, possessing his "formal freedom," sinful man loses his "material freedom" as sin penetrates into the fundamental human sphere of freedom. The sinner no longer is able to return to God freely, nor can he find God by his own efforts. A decision to be sinless is no longer efficacious (MR, 271, 307).

The description of the man in revolt can also be expressed in more distinctively ethical terminology. Man's humanity consists in the responsible nature of his existence; that is, he is destined to respond to God. His sin does not destroy his responsibility, but it does cause him to misunderstand this responsibility. Brunner insists that men outside of faith are still aware of their responsibility, but they do not know to whom they are responsible. Men encounter their responsibility and their imperfection in the feeling of guilt that they experience when the conscience accuses them of wrong-doing or failure. But even though men experience a "bad conscience," the conscience tells them nothing about God; it does not even tell them what it is from which they are shut out by their sin (DI, 156-57). Borrowing from Kierkegaard, Brunner describes the man in sin as sick, and his "sickness unto death" exhibits itself as despair (D, III, 271; D, II, 126). Because man cannot be totally evil, he can never escape a sense of "unquietness," "unrest," and the "longing for something better" (MR, 181, 195). Brunner interprets this sense of guilt and despair as the awareness of God, but only as the God of Wrath, as the Deus absconditus (DI, 158). All men are related to God, either positively or negatively; and the nature of that relation determines the essential nature of the moral life.

Brunner's characterization of the man in revolt is clearly a theological interpretation of the nature of life apart from faith, but it is an interpretation designed to account for the restlessness and despair which Brunner thinks we can observe in the actual lives of unbelievers. Brunner interprets the moral life of the man in revolt as a legalistic distortion. The man whose life is founded on a misunderstanding of his own nature and destiny, or rather is a rejection of his God-given destiny, necessarily misunderstands the true nature of moral existence. Brunner thinks that all natural morality and ethics is either eudaemonistic or legalistic; but in either form, natural morality is dominated by the principle of self-seeking and self-reference, and it becomes a means of self-assertion and an attempt to achieve self-security (DI, 68-71; M, 606). It is legalism, rather than eudaemonism, which holds Brunner's attention.

Brunner's discussions of legalism involve two senses of legalism which he never distinguishes. In the first sense, legalism means the rule nature of moral obligation; in this sense, legal morality is dominated by a spirit of strict adherence to the letter of the law understood as a collection of rules. In the second sense, legalism refers to man's efforts at self-justification. Brunner's failure to distinguish between them carefully results from the close relation between them. In Brunner's view, the two aspects of legalism are inseparable, because the means of legalistic self-justification is the rigorous obedience to legalistic moral rules. Brunner is wary of rules in any form, partly because of their potential use as instruments of self-justification.

Thus Brunner interprets the moral effort of the sinful man as an attempt to mend the rift with God by justifying himself in the eyes of God (DI, 71). The mistake of such an understanding of responsibility, he says, is that it transforms the free response which God wills into a legal duty, with the result that sinful man is moved only by a sense of legal compulsion (MR, 230). Even the awareness of the distinction between good and evil is the result of man's sinful condition, in the sense that the knowledge of the good as something that man can achieve and that it is his duty to achieve reflects the great disturbance that has taken place in the relation of man with God (M, 148; MR, 128, 156). This problem strikes at the heart of Brunner's understanding of the moral life.

> The Good that one does simply from a sense of duty is never the Good. Duty and genuine goodness are mutually exclusive. Obedience due to a sense of unwilling constraint is bondage, and indeed the bondage of sin. If I feel I ought to do right, it is a sign that I cannot do it. If I could really do it, there would be no question of "ought" about it at all. The sense of ought shows me the Good at an infinite, impassable distance from my will. Willing obedience is never the fruit of a sense of "ought" but only of love. (DI, 74)

But the morality of the man in revolt is precisely the morality of duty, constraint, and legal obligation. The portrait of the natural man that Brunner draws is that of a man feverishly engaged in moral effort for the purpose of gaining a justified status before God. His assessment of natural morality as a frantic, self-righteous striving for self-justification applies not only to the endeavor to do good actions, but even to the attempt to achieve a good disposition and a virtuous character (M, 293; DI, 165-66). These efforts at self-justification are not merely fruitless; they are evidence of man's sinful condition and testimony to his sinful desire for independence and self-sufficiency.

Brunner purports to be describing the condition of the natural man, but one wonders sometimes whether his description is based on the actual observation of men, or whether his interpretation is dictated by certain theological assumptions. Of course, Brunner is not unique among theologians in his description and interpretation of the condition of the non-believer; there is a long tradition in which he stands that goes back at least to Paul. But we still have cause to question whether this description does correspond to the real experience of men. One wonders, for example, whether all unbelievers experience the sense of despair and "sickness unto death" that Brunner attributes to them. For many men the experience of religious need seems certainly less dramatic than this description implies, and I dare say that there are some who have no conscious awareness of any need of God at all. I should think that no single account of men's awareness of sin corresponds to the feelings of all men, certainly not the sense of despair.

A theology like Brunner's could never admit the existence of William James' healthy souls who experience no sense of need for rebirth; but even within the scheme of his own theology, Brunner should be able to take account of the variety of ways in which men experience religious need. A more flexible interpretation of the man in revolt, acknowledging the many different manifestations of sin in the lives of different individuals, would increase the usefulness of Brunner's thought from an apologetic point of view, since it would speak to the needs of more people; moreover, it would render his description of the condition of sinful man more acceptable theologically and ethically, since it would reflect more accurately the actual condition of men.

Furthermore, one wonders whether Brunner's description of the unbeliever as one frantically preoccupied with his own self-justification is empirically justified. There are many men who appear less than frantic about self-justification, if they are concerned with it at all. Indeed, I venture to say that self-justifying legalism is probably more characteristic of the Christian community than of the natural man.

Brunner himself seems vaguely aware of the discrepancy between his description and the actual experience of men. Thus we find claims that all merely human moral acts, as instances of man's emancipation from God, are evil, and that all morality not based on justification by faith is "work-righteousness" (M, 612; DI, 71; D, III, 193). But side by side with these claims we also find statements indicating that Brunner is aware of the possibility of some non-legalistic acts of moral goodness. He speaks, for example, of the "practical idealism and humanism" of a physician who "wears himself out in the service of suffering human beings" (DI, 184). It is perhaps such examples as this that lead Brunner to speak of the "grain of truth" in the theory of "unconscious Christianity" (MR, 459).

There is another indication that Brunner himself may have been conscious that his explanation of natural morality as legalistic was oversimplified. He comments that natural morality is either legalistic or eudaemonistic (DI, 68). The existence of eudaemonistic or hedonistic morality would seem to count against the theory that all natural men are legalists. Even to assert that all men who adhere to an ethic of duty are legalists attempting to justify themselves seems to be an unwarranted generalization; but the existence of eudaemonists, whose goal is the attainment of "well-being" rather than the fulfillment of an obligation, would seem to require a revision of Brunner's assessment. But surprisingly Brunner asserts that even the hedonist is legalistic, for he, too, possesses universal rules and he, too, is justified by actions and rendered secure by his general principle (DI, 69). It is one thing to assert, as Brunner does, that in a eudaemonistic morality man is the central point of reference and that man's self-interest and man's realization of the good is the focus; such an assertion may be theologically justifiable. But it is quite another thing to claim that all eudaemonistic morality is based on man's desire to justify himself; this contention seems far from obvious.

Late in his career, Brunner implies that he would qualify his earlier view that the concept of responsibility must be either Christian or legalistic. In a brief statement, upon which he does not elaborate, Brunner suggests that he would not insist so strongly upon the legalistic nature of natural ethics as its incompleteness (TEB, 348). Such a qualification, if explicitly worked out in Brunner's system, would be a significant one. He could still preserve the supremacy of religion in its relation to morality by making the limited claim that all merely moral gradations of good and evil exist within the sphere of sin and hence have no value in restoring the relation with God (DI, 71). He could even maintain his position that the Christian is potentially superior to the unbeliever even on the level of natural morality. But he would not be required to assert that all unbelievers are self-seeking and self-righteous, concerned supremely with self-justification. Unfortunately, the qualification comes too late to alter Brunner's systematic writings. Throughout his career he seems compelled by his theological presuppositions to assert what he vaguely sensed was not true about actual men, namely, that all natural men are legalists.

Man in Christ

If the man apart from faith lives independently, in opposition to God, the life of the man of faith consists in his dependence upon God. Whereas the unbeliever, despite his greatest and most heroic efforts, cannot merit a justified status before God, the believer receives justification and righteousness as the gift of God. He is reunited with God, receiving freedom from sin and freedom to depend wholly on God (DI, 78). Because in faith man is no longer at odds with his creator, the contradiction is removed, the internal division is demolished, and the new man is "gathered together" as a total personality (D, III, 197, 272). Now that he is accepted into fellowship with God, the man of faith is able to accept himself and is restored to fellowship with other men. Faith, like sin, involves the whole man, both his outward behavior and his inner life.

Thus in faith man discovers that God does not primarily desire legally correct behavior, but personal surrender.

> God does not desire "something" from us--He desires us, ourselves; not our works, but our personality, our will, our heart. (DI, 188)

Therefore, the opposite of sin is not goodness or virtue in the relative sense of legal compliance, but faith (MR, 274; D, II, 110f; D, III, 157).

This faith has two important aspects, new knowledge and personal transformation. It involves first a new knowledge of God and a new knowledge of self. In faith man comes to know God as the loving God who both forgives man and gives him the possibility of loving. Moreover, only in faith does a man possess sufficient self-knowledge to understand the basis of his humanity, that is, the destiny for which he was created, and to understand his own sinful condition and his impotence to redeem himself (M, 602-4; DI, 75). The new knowledge is ethically important, since to know God in faith is to know him as Lord and to learn "to discern His will in all its salutary moral earnestness" (M, 203).

Moreover, faith involves a personal transformation. The new knowledge of faith leads to a complete reordering of the believer's life. The man "in Christ" is a new creation, a new man. He is restored to his true humanity and becomes a new being (D, III, 169, 273; DI, 77-79). The new man is a changed man, whose old self-sufficiency and arrogant self-will is broken. Repentance and faith mean the cessation of false independence and the return to an attitude of dependence. This new man is not merely an idea or a future possibility, but already a reality, even if a hidden reality (M, 606-12).

The change of heart, whereby God becomes the Lord of life, is the supreme moral fact; it creates a wholly new and different kind of moral existence. Brunner conceives of the Christian way of life as totally unlike all natural morality, because the Christian moral life does not involve a sense of legal duty, but is characterized by free, spontaneous response to the personal God. Faith affects the will of man, changing that will so that the will of God takes possession of the human will and the believer is absorbed into the purpose of God. Through faith the Christian becomes a "volunteer in the Divine army," and by virtue of this commitment to God, God's will for the world becomes the will of the believer (DI, 79; TC, 109; M, 599). Thus the moral impulse which now moves the Christian is love. No longer is there anything "slavish" about his life; it is childlike, spontaneous, and voluntary. Faith and the free response of love are thus inseparable, the one leading into the other directly as a doorway opens into a room (M, 604).

The primary fact about the life of the man in Christ, then, is that it issues from a new spirit given by the God of grace. Brunner refers to this new morality as an "evangelical ethic," since it springs from the gracious gift of God (DI, 10). The whole direction of the Christian's life is altered. No longer does he anxiously strive toward God, but he lives as one whose whole life begins with God. The righteousness of faith is now the starting point from which the life of the Christian originates, not the goal toward which it strives. The Christian life is characterized more by thankfulness for what has been given than by aspiration for what ought to be (DI, 76, 189; M, 612; TC, 79).

The notion of an evangelical ethic means that God acts in the action of the man in Christ. Goodness is only a divine possibility; only God is good, and only that which God does is good (DI, 72). Consequently, Brunner reasons, men can only do good deeds when God acts through men (DI, 162).

The emphasis on the gift of God means that faith and love are never human possessions. Christian moral existence is never a fixed state of being, a permanent and continuous state of affairs; rather, it is always an event which exists only in the actuality of decision, as man continually receives the gift of faith from the hand of God (DI, 80, 307; M, 618).

But the stress on God's action is in no way to be interpreted as neglecting the human side of faith. Faith is a gift of God, but it is appropriated by human decision (M, 599). There is a human as well as a divine aspect of justification and sanctification. Justification or regeneration, two metaphors for the same reality, is the "great, eternally decisive change" which takes place in the "invisible core of personality" as Christ is formed in man through the death of the old man and the creation of the new (D, III, 274). From its human side, this experience is known as "conversion," emphasizing the human aspect of the process of changing directions and accepting what God has done. "What is essential," Brunner says, "is that you yourself should become another man, and that cannot happen without your help" (D, III, 282). Likewise, Brunner's understanding of sanctification as the gradual growth of the new man under the progressive influence of the Holy Spirit also has its human side, since God never works in man without claiming man to join him in that work (D, III, 300-2).

Because the evangelical ethic which Brunner propounds involves not only God's gift but also man's acceptance of the gift, the notion of demand does not completely disappear. Brunner contends strenuously that the Christian ethic is not merely a description of the Christian moral life, with no note of the imperative. On the ethical level, reflection about the Christian life is not merely a prediction of what will be the shape of the life of the converted man (DI, 85). Rather, Christian ethics unavoidably contains a normative element. On the moral level, the Christian does not only experience the grace of God, but also his demand. Employing the word play familiar in German ethical writing, Brunner insists that the Christian life is both gift and task, Gabe und Aufgabe (DI, 242). Since the new man exists only in the obedience of faith, the indicative "Thou art the new man" is necessarily followed by the imperative, "Be the new man! Put on the new man" (DI, 161; D, III, 297).

The sense of demand which even the Christian experiences results partly from the fact that the believer is also one who does not believe; he is not only a spontaneous child, but also a disobedient child, who must be "ordered" to do his duty (M, 612). The implication of this statement seems to be that the sense of demand would disappear if the man of faith were not also an unbeliever. But other passages do not stress the continuing sinfulness of the believer as the source of the imperative, but emphasize the alteration of the nature of the demand. The demand remains, but no longer as legal obligation. It becomes, rather, the imperative that follows from the bestowal of God's love. The law ceases to be a command of a master to a slave and becomes the instruction of father to his son (DI, 150). In this sense, the command of God no longer needs to be enjoined upon the believer; he needs only to be "reminded" of it (D, III, 299). The imperative remains, but it is the imperative of guidance by a gracious God, not the externally imposed requirements of an arbitrary autocrat.[1] For the sake of clarity, Brunner should have explicitly stated that the necessity for this divine instruction rests not only and perhaps not even primarily on man's sinfulness, but is required by his creatureliness as well.

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[1] Paul L. Lehmann, in "The Foundation and Pattern of Christian Behavior," Christian Faith and Social Action, ed. John A. Hutchison (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), pp. 93-116, argues that Brunner's ethic begins as an attempt to interpret the good in terms of justification through grace alone, but that he betrays his purpose of developing an evangelical ethic when he reintroduces the notion of obligation, which militates against what he said about free response. Lehmann says, "When the will of God regarded as demand overshadows freedom in 'unconditional obedience,' then the will of God tends to be detached from its concrete context in the redemptive activity of God, and to be welded instead to the sterile and abstract uniformity of the divine law" (p. 100). Lehmann argues that the translator has rightly interpreted the thrust of Brunner's systematic ethic by calling it The Divine Imperative. He says that an ethic based on the self-revelation of God in Christ is more concerned about the Divine Indicative than about the Divine Imperative. The primary question is not what God commands, but what he does.

It is impossible to pursue this criticism at any length without becoming involved in a critique of Lehmann's whole understanding of the nature of ethics. However, to indicate briefly Brunner's probable response to this criticism, I should note that Brunner conceives of ethics as concerned primarily with man's action; it is this emphasis which distinguishes it without separating it from systematic theology, which is concerned primarily with God's action. The important question is not whether Christian ethics is concerned with imperatives, but what is the nature of these imperatives. Brunner insists that the whole nature of the imperative has been altered in Christian faith. The important question to be addressed to Brunner is whether he is faithful to this important insight.

The man of faith receives instruction from God by virtue of his relationship of personal communion with God, which enables him to hear the command of God. The immediacy of the connection of morality and religion in Brunner's thinking becomes most obvious in his choice of the language of "command" to refer to the divine moral guidance available to the Christian.

Throughout his career the idea of personal moral guidance through the Holy Spirit recurs in Brunner's writing, although the language and tone varies somewhat from book to book. In _The Mediator_ he speaks of moral decision as "listening to the call of God" in the moment of decision (M, 555). In _The Divine Imperative_, he speaks primarily of "hearing the concrete Command of God in the moment of decision," a command which is the personal word of the Creator received through the "voice of the Spirit" (DI, 111, 197f, 136). Brunner commends the Oxford Group for their emphasis on the guidance of the Spirit, remarking that

> The belief that, in so far as we believe in Jesus Christ, we are led by the Holy Spirit so that _he_ tells us what we should each moment do and leave undone--that is not fanaticism but biblical Christianity. (COG, 84)

During the middle period of his career, the sense of immediacy is not emphasized, but in some of the latest of his writings, Brunner again affirms the significance of such direct language. The last volume of his dogmatics contains statements once more emphasizing the "immediate guidance" which the Christian receives from his living Lord through the "leading of the Spirit," and he again speaks of the will of God as a "personal commandment" (D, III, 207, 302). Here again he claims that the necessary decision can never be anticipated by a moral law. Instead, men must await the leading of the Spirit as they quietly and prayerfully listen for his voice, which has something new and original to say about every concrete problem of life (D, III, 321).

Of all the ways in which the idea is expressed, the dominant and most noteworthy is the language characteristic of The Divine Imperative, the language of command, which is even incorporated into the German title of that work, Das Gebot und die Ordnungen (The Command and the Orders). Because this language is indicative of Brunner's understanding of the nature of the Christian moral life, it deserves careful attention. The first thing to notice about the command-obedience model is its deontological nature; that is, it is concerned with duty and obligation, not with achieving goals. "Nothing is good save obedience to the command of God, just because it is obedience" (DI, 59). We are to do the good simply because it is commanded by God (DI, 121).

It may be objected that an ethic of spontaneous love is incompatible with an ethic of obedience, that is, that Brunner's deontology does not fit the motivational ethic of love. But Brunner would respond that the Christian message transforms the whole notion of deontology. Because the command is the personal command of God, and not the requirement of an abstract law, the notion of duty is immediately altered. Moreover, the God who commands is also the God from whom man receives his being and his destiny, so that man's obedience is his fulfillment. Therefore, Brunner argues, the Christian ethic is neither a legalistic ethic of duty nor a naturalistic eudaemonistic ethic, but includes the truth of both (DI, 120).

Brunner uses the phrase "Command of God" in two senses. Sometimes he speaks of the command of God as the general commandment to love God and the neighbor.

> The Divine Command is one and one alone, namely, to acknowledge this God as the God who is, to know that He is our God; it is the "first commandment": "I am the Lord thy God, thou shalt have none other Gods but Me." (DI, 132)

Since the love of God includes the love of man, the one command includes the two-fold commandment of love. The one command is the summary of all the Biblical commandments, and all the commandments are expositions of the one command (DI, 133-36).

The second sense of the "Divine Command," and the sense which Brunner most often intends, refers to the "concrete commandment of love," that is, to the concrete command in a particular situation to perform a specific action (DI, 197). According to Brunner, God never requires anything general; rather, he instructs definite people to do definite things. His command is absolutely concrete, and it cannot be expressed in general terms (DI, 122, 198). Moreover, God's command, in this second sense, can never be known in advance.

> Therefore we can never know beforehand what God will require. God's command can only be perceived at the actual moment of hearing it....You cannot say what it means to love here and now; He alone can tell you what this means for you at this moment. (DI, 117)

The Divine Command for the actual moment cannot be discovered by logical casuistical deduction from the law or even from the principle of love; the Command can only be received afresh each time through the voice of the Spirit (DI, 111, 354). Even those actions which Brunner considers almost categorically enjoined or prohibited, such as the prohibition of suicide and capital punishment and the duty of truthfulness, could conceivably be contravened by the concrete Divine Command (DI, 171, 477, 325).

The directness of the relationship of religion and morality suggested by the particularity of the command in the second sense is accentuated by the description of the personal way in which this command is received. Dale Burrington has noted in another connection that the command language is auditory, a reflection of the Old Testament imagery of God's speaking to particular men. Burrington contrasts this with the visual imagery of the philosophical intuitionists, who "see" what is required in a situation.[1] The auditory nature of the imagery suggests that the agent does not simply "discover" the will of God, even in God's creation. Indeed, the will of God is not "there" in the situation, but can be known only by hearing immediately the Command itself.

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[1] Dale E. Burrington, "The Command and the Orders in Brunner's Ethic," Scottish Journal of Theology, XX (June, 1967), 153-55.

Brunner's language of "hearing the command in the moment" may sound strange to modern ears, seemingly foreign to our actual moral experience. But what Brunner is talking about is the familiar human process of decision-making in the face of moral issues. To be sure, Brunner is convinced that men can meet God in a personal encounter, and he intends to be taken seriously in his remarks about the believer's living in communion with God and hearing God speak to him. In his most extragavant statement, Brunner even hints that the command may be so clear as to eliminate the possibility of error (DI, 204, 150). But "hearing the command" does not mean the auditory sensation of hearing actual voices. But then how does Brunner think that we perceive the command of God? How does God speak to us?

God uses historical situations, other people, and the Bible through which to speak. Moreover, Brunner does not wish to deny the human element involved in the perception of God's command through the historical situation. In one of his more cautious statements, Brunner acknowledges the human difficulty of "hearing the command" aright.

> The first and most important mark of real divine guidance is humility, reverence before the God whose will we always know only imperfectly, and insight into our weakness and sin, which causes us ever and again to mistake our own ideas and opinions for God's will. (COG, 85)

The human element is an inseparable aspect of the hearing of God's command. When he is thinking about the human aspect of the "ethical moment," Brunner uses the word "decision," which he seems to equate with "hearing the divine command" (DI, 91).

He does not mean, of course, that man's decision determines what God wills, but he seems to use "decision" to refer to the total process of human moral deliberation. If he were to analyze the process more carefully, perhaps he would conclude that men "perceive" or "discern" that something is the command of God, whereupon they "decide" to accept it and act upon it. Although Brunner seems committed to the more personalistic language of a direct address by God, the process of deliberation which seems to be involved in hearing that address might be described somewhat less artificially as my discernment of what I ought to do in this situation in light of my responsibility before God. Perhaps Brunner's theological presuppositions prevent him from accepting such an interpretation of the "ethical moment. But it seems to me that such an account portrays more accurately my own awareness of my moral experience, including my sense of human fallibility, without giving up the notion of the divine origin of my responsibility.[1]

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[1] James M. Gustafson, in a recent article, "Moral Discernment in the Christian Life," Norm and Context in Christian Ethics, ed. Gene H. Outka and Paul Ramsey (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968), pp. 17-36, treats moral deliberation in terms of moral discernment. He suggests that such an approach focuses upon the human

The conception of the moral life which underlies Brunner's idea of the command of God implies the supremacy of the moral level, since it is on this level alone that one hears the command of God. Ethical reflection can never instruct the believer concerning his duty; it can only prepare him to hear the divine command, although, as we shall see, this preparation may sometimes come close to providing concrete instruction. But this view means that moral discernment can only occur in the first person singular.

We can see the importance of this implication by observing its effect on our understanding of moral _judgment_ as it is distinguished from moral _choice_. I use the former phrase to refer to judgments about the rightness or wrongness of the actions of others or about abstract "cases" or even about my own past actions. I use the phrase "moral choice" to refer to my own choice of a course of action for myself. Brunner's understanding of the nature of God's command logically excludes all moral judgment. The command is a personal address to a particular person in a specific situation assigning him a definite task; it is a command which no one but the agent himself can experience (DI, 117). No one can make a judgment about any action but his own future course of action.

But surely such an understanding of moral judgment impoverishes the realm of moral discussion, for we do in

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element in moral deliberation and points up the similarity of Christian and non-Christian deliberation.

fact make judgments about the actions of other individuals and groups, actions that are completed, are now in progress, or are expected; and we do make judgments about our own past actions. To be sure, we approach occasions of moral choice differently from situations of moral judgment, since we are never quite as involved in our judgments about others as we are in our own choices. But this difference only shows that we have neither the same sense of responsibility nor the same sense of urgency when considering the actions of others as we do when we consider our own. When we are concerned with our own actions, we feel the pressure of moral choice more keenly, since we must both choose and act on the basis of our choices, whereas when we are concerned with the acts of others, we are only passively passing judgment.

Another difference between moral judgment and moral choice which we might observe is that we are often less certain in our judgments about others than we are in our own choices; but this difference may result from our assumption that only the agent can know all the relevant facts of the situation. Despite these differences, there certainly are some occasions when we are as emphatic and as confident in our judgments about the actions of others as we are about our own, and we do not feel that we are unjustified in making such assessments. The command-obedience model simply cannot account for this kind of experience, whereas the more general notion of the will of God is entirely compatible with it. The systematic exclusion of such a large portion of what has been traditionally part of moral discourse raises the question whether the notion of the command of God as Brunner uses it is not at least misleading and inadequate, and perhaps even completely unwarranted and unjustified as a representation of the nature of the moral life.

It might be argued in defense of Brunner that even though _moral_ judgment of the actions of others may be illegitimate, we can still make _ethical_ judgments about these actions, since the ethical level allows for the distance and the reflection necessary for judging the acts of others, whereas the existential nature of the moral level may exclude such judgments. Such a position may have some merit in accounting for the difference between moral choice and moral judgment, but I am not sure that it is one that is consistent with Brunner's understanding of ethics. In Brunner's thinking _ethical_ judgments are always tentative, never as clear and definite as concrete perceptions of the divine command. But in our experience, we do make moral judgments about the actions of others and about our own past actions which are every bit as decisive and we feel every bit as justified as the moral choices which we make about our own course of action for the immediate future. Moreover, even though Brunner does allow for ethical reflection removed from the concrete moment of moral choice, devoting countless pages himself to such _general_ reflection, still the way he justifies such reflection is by saying that it prepares the way for moral _choice_, that is, for hearing the divine command. But if ethics is only preparation for the command, then it cannot be the basis for a moral judgment about the actions of another, since the command is concerned only with the moral choices of agents, not with moral judgments by spectators.

It would be possible, perhaps, for an exponent of Brunner's view to modify the notion of "command" so that it included personal divine commands to condone or condemn certain actions of others in addition to commanding particular deeds, but such a tactic seems contrived as an attempt to salvage an inadequate organizing concept. The more reasonable conclusion is simply to admit that even though the model of the divine command has a certain theological appeal, it does not really capture the essential nature of Christian moral experience.

Brunner repeatedly uses theological language to make what also appear to function as empirical judgments about the nature of Christian moral experience. I have already suggested that the command language tends to obscure the human aspect of moral discernment. Now I will suggest that some vocabulary similar to that of moral discernment can account for the process of both moral choice and moral judgment. Moreover, the idea of moral discernment seems to presuppose the unity of the moral life, including the unity of ethical reflection and moral discernment, to a degree which seems impossible in Brunner's command model, with its gap between "preparation" and "hearing the command."

The notion of particular and discrete commands of God emphasizes the disconnectedness of individual actions rather than the organic unity of the Christian life. Yet it is just the unity which the moral life receives from the pervasive influence of love that Brunner considers fundamental. Thus Brunner's primary intention is not served by the command model, which is his central organizing concept. It should be noted, however, that it is only the idea of the command of God as a concrete command that is problematic. The command of God as the general commandment to love does not raise this difficulty; rather, it points to that which gives continuity to the Christian's moral life. Despite the impression which his command language creates, Brunner does view the Christian life as an organic whole in which individual actions function as visible manifestations of the life of love which constitutes the real substance of existence on the moral level. In order to interpret properly this other side of Brunner's description of the Christian's moral life, we must examine carefully what he says about the life of love.

Love as the Essence of the Moral Life

According to Brunner, the command of God is always and only the command to love. The concrete commands are only specifications of what it means to love in particular situations. The first object of love is God. However, love for God is not a moral command. Morality is concerned with relations between men; the love of man for God is not on the same level with love of men for other men. The love of God is the root of all morality (DI, 309). Faith in God and love of God lays the foundation for all other forms of love. The love for the neighbor which grows out of faith provides the glue which holds together all of the discrete actions of the life of love.

Brunner describes the nature of that love that gives continuity to the Christian life as unconditional, self-sacrificial giving of oneself to others. This kind of love is so totally unselfish that Brunner speaks of it as irrational superabundance (D, III, 309). Love in the Christian sense of agape knows no boundaries and no favorites. It is not dependent upon the merit of the one loved. The Christian does not love a man because he is worthy, but simply because God loves him. Moreover, agape is not love for mankind at large, but is directed toward the particular individuals whom one meets, simply because they are given to him to love. Love is thus a way of looking at the neighbor, not as a "case," but as a particular human being to be accepted in this moment (M, 605-6).

Love generates warmth and feeling for others. It issues in sympathy and a readiness to listen and to accept the other person as a whole for what he is, in his uniqueness, in the individuality of his particular and given character. Love involves regarding the other person as a whole, and thus desiring him as a whole. The "unconditioned will to community" is the definition of love that most often lies behind Brunner's statements about love. To love another person is, above all else, to desire to hold fellowship with him (DI, 320-23, 278; D, III, 311).

But another aspect of the self-giving nature of Christian love involves the desire to secure the perfect good for the loved one, including not only satisfaction of his psychophysical needs, but also concern for his eternal destiny (DI, 237). This self-giving love does not worry about reciprocity; it does not demand its rights and is even willing to be wronged (DI, 326-27; D, III, 309). The command of love does not require us to "throw ourselves away"; however, since the total energy of love is directed toward other people, even self-cultivation and the development of self-control become valid moral requirements only when they promote our service to others (DI, 171, 317). Because love is always concerned for others, Christian morality in its essential nature is a social morality. It cannot be a morality focused on self-fulfillment; self-fulfillment can come only as the by-product of the service of others.

Because faith and love are the essence of true morality, the question of the relation of faith and love to action becomes one of the important issues in Brunner's thought. But it is difficult to interpret Brunner on this point, partly because of the complexity of his thought, but also partly because of his lack of clarity on this particular issue. Certainly Brunner believes that love is not a merely passive quality. Love must issue in action. He speaks of the "necessary tendency" of love as an emotion to merge into volition and thus into "active helpfulness" (DI, 323). But this simply stated understanding of the direct translation of faith and love into action is obscured in much of Brunner's systematic treatment of moral questions. In the course of this chapter, I shall be touching upon several aspects of the problem. Let us encounter the first by examining Brunner's view of the role of love as a motive.

Love and Motivation

In a key passage in The Divine Imperative, Brunner says that love provides the motive for doing those deeds that God, speaking through the concrete situation, requires men to do (DI, 128-29). As we shall see in the next chapter, Brunner distinguishes the work of God as Creator from his work as Redeemer. We can know what external deeds God commands by observing the orders of creation which he has established as Creator. But the motive for this action, love, seems to come from God the Redeemer. Regarding the determination of the action which God requires, Brunner says,

> The material order is derived from the order of Creation, but the motive from which conduct should spring is always and everywhere Agape....So far as motive is concerned, our motto is: "all from Christ," but where the concrete demand is formulated, the only rule is: "loyalty to the order of Creation." (D, II, 226)

Or again in Justice and the Social Order, where the requirements of the order of creation are described as the demands of justice, he says,

> There is only one ultimately legitimate motive of moral action--love. But there is a prescript of material action which, however, is justice, not love. (JSO, 263)

The idea of motive is central to understanding Brunner's treatment of the relation of love and action, as is evident in the passages I have cited. But what does Brunner mean by "motive"? Some recent philosophical analyses of the concept of motivation have posed the issues that are involved in ascribing a motive to an agent. I refer particularly to the work of Eric D'Arcy[1] and Alan White.[2]

The fundamental point of both these writers for our purposes is that a motive is not a mental condition, an attitude, or a disposition which characterizes an agent. A motive is not a piece of "mental furniture." The term motive resembles the words reason and cause, none of which are in the same linguistic category with a feeling, a disposition, or an attitude. To ascribe a motive to an agent, that is, to make a motive statement about his behavior, is to offer a kind of explanation of his conduct; it is to give reasons of a certain kind for his action. Dispositions and attitudes are not themselves motives, but they can provide reasons for doing some acts; they can be "factors in a motive explanation." Thus love as a mere attitude or mental state is not a motive, but if it becomes a reason for performing a specific act, then it can be the motive for doing that act.

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[1] Eric D'Arcy, Human Acts (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), especially pp. 140-55.

[2] Alan R. White, The Philosophy of Mind (New York: Random House, 1967), especially pp. 135-39.

When D'Arcy and White speak of giving reasons to explain behavior, they normally have in mind specific reasons, such as "he visited his aunt in order to win her favor." They do not normally think about motives in the kind of general terms that Brunner does in referring to love as the proper motive of all Christian action. But D'Arcy does at least make room for such dispositions to function as motives when they explain conduct.[1]

But what does Brunner mean by motive? When he says love is a motive, does he mean that it is only a mental attitude, or is it also a reason for acting? Does Brunner conceive of "motive" as a state of mind or a feeling, say a feeling of warmth or sympathy for another person? Or is he further suggesting that this attitude or feeling or state of mind provides a reason for performing some action? The issue at stake is a most important one, yet it is one about which Brunner's thinking is least clear.

On the one hand, as we shall see more clearly later, Brunner emphasizes the disjunction between love and the rationally determined "material demand" of the situation, and he indicates the moral superiority of "showing love" over "doing loving actions." Statements of this nature seem to imply that love is essentially a pervasive attitude which holds the moral existence of the agent together, that it is a kind of psychological fact about the personality of the man of faith, but not that it is a reason for doing certain actions.

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[1] We may note another significant difference between D'Arcy and Brunner. D'Arcy is concerned with the evaluation of human acts; so he considers the question of motive only when its consideration might affect the evaluation of the act. Brunner, however, is primarily concerned with the moral value of human agents. Therefore, the question of motive is always important for him; indeed, we might say that it is the important question.

But on the other hand, Brunner also makes remarks about love merging into volition, and he refers to love as "the unity of willing, knowing, and feeling, the sole total act of the person" (MR, 220). These latter statements imply that love is not merely a favorable attitude toward a person, but that it leads to an intention to perform acts of love for the benefit of the one loved; that is, it provides a reason for doing loving deeds.

It may be objected that the discussion is confused by the ambiguous use of the word "reason." The concept of motive as reason could have two possible meanings. It could have the meaning of "having a reason" in the sense of having a cause. But it could also be understood as "giving a reason," as an explicit function of the practical intellect. But presumably the two senses of motive as reason are connected, since having a reason involves being able to give a reason when asked. But in either case, the motive is connected with the action; it is not merely passive attitude.

Thus in Brunner's thought, love can be a motive if it is the cause of an action or the articulated explanation of the action. But if it is a reason for acting in either sense of "reason," it is one factor in the process by which the agent moves toward the moment of moral decision, and therefore it has a role in the moral deliberation of the agent. On the whole, Brunner does seem to feel that love does provide a "reason" of some kind for doing what the orders demand; love provides the "why" for which the orders give the "what." But he fails to see clearly that this necessarily gives love a role in the determination of the action. If love were only a state of mind occurring simultaneously with a particular action, but not providing a reason for it, then we might remark on the novelty of such a chronological coincidence; but we would not say that love was the motive for the action. Even if we wished to emphasize the causal sense of motive as a "reason for acting," we still would only endorse love as a "good" reason for acting because it "causes" certain kinds of actions of which we approve. But if it is the case that love causes right actions, then it is hard to see how we can avoid appealing to love in our moral reflection when we are seeking to determine what acts we ought to perform.

To prevent the discussion from becoming too abstract, let me draw upon three kinds of cases from Brunner's writings to illustrate how love can and cannot be a motive for action, and hence how it is related to the process of moral deliberation. The first illustration is Brunner's example of the Good Samaritan (D, II, 225; CC, I, 152-53). He suggests by implication that the command of love provided the motive for the Good Samaritan's kindly deed in helping the man who had been robbed and beaten, but that the "material content" of his action was determined rationally on the basis of the order of creation, i.e., by knowing from the order of creation what is necessary for a sound human body. But a little thought should convince us that the "reason" for the action was love. The Samaritan helped the injured man *because* he had compassion for him, not just because he knew what was needed to restore health. His feeling of compassion or sympathy for the man was not merely an emotional attitude toward him, but issued in a volition to do whatever he could to save his life. His compassion did not, of course, tell him what would be required to help the man; he needed at least some elementary medical knowledge in order to determine specifically what was needed. But love did give him the reason for using this technical skill.

In the first illustration, seeing how love provided a reason for acting was relatively simple, for the case merely involved love's demand that technical knowledge be used to achieve the objective of healing. The second example that I have chosen involves love as a reason for acting in a much less direct fashion. It is the situation of a judge who is required to pass judgment and sentence a man under the criminal code (DI, 228). Unlike the first case, the situation of the judge requires of him a kind of action that seems opposed to the love described above. If Christian love is forgiving love which does not ask about the value of a man, but accepts him as he is, then it would appear that love would require the judge to forgive the criminal. In spite of the criminal's apparently unloving and unloveable nature, on the surface at least it would seem that love would demand that he be forgiven and accepted by society. But, Brunner argues, a consideration of the order of creation, in this case the order of the state, leads to the conclusion that the law must be enforced and the lawbreaker punished. Love seems to be a factor only in determining the attitude of the judge. Even as the judge upholds the law by sentencing the convicted man, he must continue to have a favorable personal attitude toward the man, letting him know of his concern.

Although in this case love may seem to be only an inner attitude, the appearance is misleading. Even in this case, love is not merely a state of mind, but also a reason for acting. The connection is not immediately evident, but it becomes clear when the whole moral argument is laid bare. The enforcement of criminal laws is necessary in order to prevent unscrupulous people from taking unfair advantage of other people. We cannot love the criminal to the exclusion of loving those whom he has injured and may injure. Love for these others requires that society protect them, in so far as it is possible, from future injury. Enforcement of laws is necessary for social order and communal life, and love itself recognizes the value and indeed the necessity for social order. This is not to say that love is the only basis for asserting the necessity of social order. The prudential reason can indicate the wisdom or practical necessity for order, and natural moral reason can even point to the obligation to support a social order. But for many Christians, at least, the appeal to love is the ultimate reason for social order and hence the final reason for the enforcement of the criminal code.

For the third problem, let us begin with a principle or rule rather than with a specific case--the rule of monogamy. The rule of having only one wife cannot be deduced in any way from the principle of agape, Brunner argues, because agape does not admit of any exclusiveness in choosing its objects (D, II, 224-26). Thus the practice of having only one wife is not based on agape, but arises solely from the order of creation. God has so created man and woman, Brunner says, that one belongs to one and not to many. In a situation in which a man is contemplating the possibility of taking a second wife, the man should refrain from doing so because of what he perceives to be the order of creation, but his motive for doing so should be love. It is difficult to determine what Brunner means here in saying that the motive for this action is love. Does he mean the attitude of the agent, or does he mean his reason for action? Brunner's references to motive occur in this context in connection with the "heart" and the "disposition," giving the impression that "motive" here means "attitude." He does not mention love as providing even an "indirect" reason for this action. It may well be that agape does indirectly require monogamy in some way which Brunner does not specify. It might be that the general health of society, a value which agape would endorse, requires this kind of family arrangement, or perhaps love requires heeding the rules of societal organization, or perhaps this is another case where justice is an extension of love, as in the second case.

But if Brunner does not see love as providing even indirectly a reason for monogamy, then it is not really a motive for the action at all; indeed, it has no relation to the action in any way. We might observe the perhaps interesting coincidence that a person had certain agapistic feelings at the same time that he was deciding to maintain his monogamous marital status, but the simultaneity of the two events would only be coincidental; the agapistic state of mind would not be related as motive or in any other way to the monogamous decision. This implication is derived from pushing to their logical conclusions some of Brunner's remarks regarding the gap between content and motive. His description of the moral life tends to separate the attitude of the agent and the action which he performs into two separate categories and to judge them by different criteria.

The error of this tendency is that it falsifies our moral experience, for moral agents do not so clearly distinguish between their attitudes and their conduct. We are at least as conscious of the connection between our attitudes and dispositions and our conduct as we are of the opposition between the two. Indeed, we think of a disposition as a disposition to act in a certain way. In so far as love is genuinely a motive, i.e., a reason for acting, then the motive and the action are necessarily connected, even if indirectly. Despite all his remarks which point to a separation of disposition and conduct, Brunner cannot finally deny the existence of a connection between them, but he does fail to examine the nature of that connection.

Let me make it clear that I am not suggesting that a loving disposition issues spontaneously in moral act or moral directives in abstraction from the facts of the historical situation. I am admitting, even insisting, that the connection of love to action may be indirect; but the connection is always real and significant. We might say that love employs reason in its service to determine what actions are really loving in a particular set of historical circumstances. In this case, the connection of love and action is indirect, but most important.

In Justice and the Social Order Brunner uses monetary imagery to indicate the relation of love to social action. He says that love must be changed into "the current coin of justice," the only "legal tender" in the world of institutions (JSO, 128). I shall elsewhere suggest that Brunner fails to see clearly that love even helps to define the meaning of justice. But granting for the moment that justice is determined by purely rational means with no reference to love, the fact remains that for the man of faith it is still ultimately love that requires the fulfillment of the demands of justice; and thus love is still an important factor in the process of justifying the rule of justice. The fact that love is a convertible currency means that love is related to just action. Brunner himself once says that justice is the "form of love" which governs the life of men in the world of institutions (JSO, 261).

I do not wish to assert the stronger contention that only by reasoning from love can one arrive at the proper conclusion about what ought to be done, but I would urge the weaker assertion that, for the Christian, love does have a role in that determination. My purpose has been to show the necessary connection of love with action in Brunner's own thought, even though that connection is frequently obscured and sometimes even denied in his writing. He seems to stress elements of discontinuity between disposition and action, and I have attempted to show the logical necessity of their connection. To discuss motive and action as being disjunctive is a violation of the logic of motivational analysis and a defective description of our moral experience, for it implies a division within the moral agent himself and an abstract and artificial separation of moral experience into purely internal and purely external concerns. Closer attention to our own moral self-awareness would convince us, I think, that the moral life involves the total person and that moral experience is an organic whole.

The effect of love on action may be immediate and almost spontaneous in some cases, with love flowing directly into loving acts. One would think of specific acts of spontaneous philanthropy or personal ministry in the face of individual need presented to a sensitive believer as examples of this kind of immediate connection. In other cases, the effect of love is less direct, perhaps even obscured, but still necessarily involved in a complete account of the moral deliberation. But in either case, love is an organic ingredient in all truly Christian moral decisions. I shall return in the next chapter to consider how love is involved in the systematic reflection that takes place on the ethical level. But now I wish to continue the examination of the connection of disposition and action which we raised with reference to motivation by examining what Brunner says about character and conduct.

Character and Conduct

Brunner's emphasis on the separation of motive and action is a function of his conviction that the really important aspect of the moral life is not the action of the moral agent, but his character. It is perhaps ironic that Brunner devotes hundreds of pages to ethical reflection on moral conduct, yet he feels that conduct always runs a poor second to character as the object of moral evaluation. The moral being of the man is the essential, fundamental feature of his moral life. Brunner thinks that the real locus of moral value is in the doer of the action, not in the action itself. Brunner says that there are, strictly speaking, no good actions, but only good agents; good does not mean doing good, but being good (DI, 163). This is so because "God does not will only, and not in the first place, action, as such, but the heart, out of which all action springs" (D, II, 218). What is crucial is the inner disposition, since, as Brunner says, morality is a "matter of the inner life and not of outward behavior" (TC, 77; DI, 278). True discipleship consists in dwelling in God, "in being rather than in doing," for what the world needs above all else "is not action, but new men" (D, III, 303). Such passages as these help to explain Brunner's frequent unconcern with the connection between disposition and action.

Brunner does not, of course, completely ignore this connection. He does expect action to flow from the proper disposition, for "new action" arises "ever and again" from the new being (D, III, 303). But he does unquestionably locate the seat of true moral value in the disposition and not in the action. Good is primarily a predicate of the being of man, only indirectly referring to his action. Ultimately, Brunner tells us, the decisive worth of every act is in exact proportion to the inward action of turning to God to receive our life from him (DI, 279). Recalling Luther's example of the dairymaid, Brunner asserts that the moral value of her daily actions resides solely in her dedication to perform her tasks "in joyful obedience to the Will of God" (DI, 252-53).

It is within this context that Brunner's remarks excluding moral neutrality should be interpreted. Brunner contends that God's will controls absolutely everything and that the divine command is imposed on every moment, leaving no moral holidays (DI, 119). The case for this position rests on his view that the being of the moral agent is the source of continuity in the moral life and the location of moral value. In asserting that there are no "adiaphora," Brunner does not mean that every single human action is charged with ultimate moral seriousness, that even the most insignificant action requires careful moral scrutiny and decision, and that there are no individual actions which are morally indifferent in themselves. Brunner's point rather is that actions that are otherwise morally indifferent gain significance as part of an over-all style of life. God claims our whole existence; therefore, all our actions are moral acts in so far as they are connected with the "spirit" which is involved in the act of faith and love (DI, 119).

Brunner refers approvingly to Luther's abolition of the problem of adiaphorism by the concept of the calling, which places the whole of life within the purview of God. Whatever one is obliged to do in his God-given calling is right, including sleeping, resting, playing games, and so on; everything else is wrong (DI, 601). Thus faith becomes the final measure of morality. Whatever is done in faith, and hence from love, is right. Everything else is wrong (DI, 162).

I want to guard against unfairly characterizing Brunner's ethic as a thoroughgoing ethic of intention, or *Gesinnungsethic*, to use the familiar German term. Brunner does not eliminate all concern for action; he expends considerable ink and energy in considering matters of right conduct. Yet I think it is not unfair to say that Brunner's ethic is still a modified intention ethic, in the sense that the *central object* of moral evaluation is the disposition of the agent. Although the attempt to bring intention into being as action is a necessary test of the sincerity of one's profession, the most important reason that such action is necessary is that action is required to *show love* (DI, 234, 278). Brunner distinguishes between two kinds of success in human action. The first test is that of *effectiveness*. Did the action accomplish what it intended in terms of external results? Did it alleviate the human need that it intended to relieve, and so on? The other measure of success is based on the goodness of the motive and the *demonstrative* value of the action. Any action which is done in faith, which is inspired by love and *reveals* love successfully, is a successful action in the absolute sense, however unsuccessful it may appear when judged by the normal standards of success. It is the demonstrative measure of success that is higher. The person who reveals love is finally more successful than the person who does loving actions, for the Kingdom of God is created by "demonstrative" rather than "energetic" action. So far as the Kingdom is concerned, energetic action is of value only when it is either also demonstrative action or prepares the way for demonstrative action. The truly good man can be described as the one who most effectively shows love (DI, 285-86).

Closely related to Brunner's conviction that "showing love" is superior to "doing loving actions" is his belief that the higher realm of action is the personal sphere, since love can most readily "show itself" in personal relations. The pre-eminence of the personal sphere is a recurrent theme in Brunner's writings. A full definition of the personal realm and its relation to the official realm must await the next chapter. But I need to make some comment now about the expression of love in the personal realm. According to Brunner, all morality is social morality. In other words, there is no individual morality, for all morality is concerned with the relationships of people to one another. But there is a wider and a narrower scope of social relations.

The narrower the scope of the social setting of action, i.e., the smaller the number of persons who are involved, the more personal the relations can be, and hence the more likelihood there is that the Christian can "show love." Thus the Christian's real work is in the personal sphere, in the relation of one human being with another (DI, 278). Love is not primarily concerned to make "great plans" and work on the "grand scale." Instead, it is content to do "what comes to hand," showing itself directly in the personal sphere (DI, 285). The priority of the personal sphere indicates that for Brunner the truly moral is essentially an internal condition which shows through in our contacts with other people.

> This way of living finds its direct expression in speech, and still more directly in our bearing, our general attitude, our behavior, our looks, our tone of voice, and our way of "giving ourselves." (DI, 278)

In subsequent chapters I will criticize Brunner for his excessively narrow understanding of love, for his disproportionate emphasis on the internal to the detriment of the external, and for the resulting exaltation of personal ethics at the expense of concern for solutions to the great social problems of the day. My present concern in observing his emphasis on the "inner life" is simply to draw out his conception of the moral life.

The disposition of love is that which underlies the total moral life, giving to it a sense of wholeness and continuity. The sphere of the disposition is the fundamental level of the moral life, the source of all morality. It is also the point at which morality is most directly related to religion in Brunner's thought, for this fundamental disposition depends continuously upon the gift of God. Brunner is sure that the disposition that unifies the moral life is not something that man can create for himself. Love is never a human possession. It is not a continuous and permanent state, but an event which happens to man, a gift from God, not in the sense of being implanted in man, but in the sense of being evoked from him by God. It is, nevertheless, something which should grow and progressively pervade the life of the man of faith. Although we can never hold and control love, we should increasingly come under its sway (D, III, 307).

What I would call "Christian character" is in essence nothing other than the process of being formed by this love. The heart filled with love is the characteristic trait of the new man. The step by step growth of the new man under the influence of the Holy Spirit, which is known theologically as sanctification, should encompass the total being of the Christian. According to Brunner, what makes true saints is not action, but living from the love of Christ and in his love (D, III, 303-4). The process of sanctification involves the movement of the Spirit in penetrating the entire being of a man so that God takes possession even of the subconscious (D, III, 293-95). The goal for the man in Christ is that everything that is not yet at God's disposal will increasingly be placed at his disposal, so that the love of God comes to control his whole being.

Christian Character and Christian Virtues

Brunner's concentration on the being of the agent might possibly arouse the expectation that he would develop a normative theory of the shape of the life of love under the categories of character and virtue, giving a somewhat detailed picture of the life of love. Although he does legitimate a more positive consideration of character and virtue than is common in a large segment of Protestant thought, Brunner finally refuses to enter into a careful examination of the character and virtues of the Christian for at least three reasons.

Brunner's view of the nature of the theological discipline of ethics helps account for his limited treatment of Christian character and virtue. In spite of his emphasis on the primacy of the "being" of the agent as the locus of moral value, Brunner conceives of ethics as primarily concerned with action. In defining Christian ethics, Brunner says that it is the "science of human conduct [emphasis added] as it is determined by Divine conduct" (DI, 86). He concludes that "the decisive point of view for ethics--even for Christian ethics--is conduct, not being." Consideration of the nature of the new being is a part of ethics only in so far as emphasis is laid on its manifesting itself in action (DI, 86). Therefore, Brunner largely excludes the subject of the virtues from the field of ethics and relegates it to the realm of pedagogy (DI, 169). Such a view of the nature of ethics is indeed unfortunate, for surely the necessary connection of conduct and character as two analytically distinct but inextricably related aspects of the moral life renders absurd the suggestion that ethics can engage in reflection about the one but not about the other. Brunner fails to see that careful ethical analysis of character may be as valuable for the development of a person's character as reflection on ethical principles may be in guiding his choices of specific actions.

Secondly, Brunner exhibits the common Protestant fear that any discussion of "dispositions," the "good will," and "character" will attribute to man something which might give him a claim on God. Brunner thinks that preoccupation with character and virtue implies a striving for goodness from below, whereas genuine goodness can only descend from above. Striving for good character and virtue means attempting to justify oneself. He is reluctant to use the terms "character" and "virtue" because the connotations of these terms in the history of ethics seem to him to involve a kind of works-righteousness which evangelical morality opposes (DI, 163-65). He can use the Biblical language of the "new man" freely, but he speaks quite hesitantly about Christian "character."

Finally, Brunner is wary of the doctrine of the virtues because of the anthropocentric and individualistic conception of virtue which he thinks characterizes Aristotelian and scholastic ethics. Such systems of ethics, by breaking down the unity of the moral life into a number of specific virtues, encourages men to seek their own self-improvement, even to the point of perfection. This self-improvement leads to self-justification. Moreover, Brunner objects to the notion, implicit in such ethical systems, that virtue can be achieved by the individual in isolation. Morality is always something social, Brunner insists (DI, 166-68).

However, Brunner is willing in The Divine Imperative to propose a qualified interpretation of virtue and character. He guards against a conventional notion of character and virtue by saying,

> The subject of a Christian ethic is neither birth nor race, nor a habit which has become a custom ("inherited nobility") nor is it even "the Christian character," but it is the new person, which, as such, is always something given and demanded, a divine and human "central act," an event which affects life as a whole, the whole being of the self in question. (DI, 163)

The point is that virtue is not a human quality that a man possesses and which gives him merit. It is a relation to God; it is faith. Virtuous living is something that happens to man; it is the gift of God (DI, 164).

But if human pride is excluded, then the discussion of virtue is legitimate. The central virtue is love. We can speak of a plurality of "particular" (einzeln) virtues only as different forms in which love appears. Viewed from above, the Christian life can be defined as love, but from below it appears as the sum of all the virtues. The plurality of virtues does not mean, however, that there are "individual" (individuell) virtues in the sense of virtues related only to oneself.[1] There are no virtues except in relationship with other people (DI, 166). Brunner illustrates the conception of the particular virtues as expressions of love by citing the examples of truthfulness and peaceableness, both of which are special ways of living in love. But he declines to "deduce and describe" the particular virtues. He says that traditional ethics has already examined this subject sufficiently, and he implies that the discussion really belongs to the sphere of pedagogy rather than ethics. We may also suspect that his fear of legalism may also be an unacknowledged reason for merely hinting at the possibility of particular virtues without developing the line of thought.

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[1] Miss Wyon's translation of Brunner's discussion of individual virtues is perhaps somewhat misleading. By translating both einzeln and individuell by the English word "individual," she fails to make clear the two different senses of "individual" virtues which Brunner is discussing. I have translated the former as "particular" virtues to make it clear that Brunner is talking about specific kinds of manifestations of the central virtue of love. He acknowledges the possibility of a plurality of "particular" or "single" or "individual" (einzeln) virtues if the entire

In addition to suggesting a qualified doctrine of the virtues, Brunner also expresses his willingness to endorse a guarded statement about Christian "character." A man's life does not consist only of distinct acts but can be characterized as consisting of "settled conditions" or a "state of being." Brunner acknowledges that there is a region of the habitual, a "permanent element," a "relative constancy," an "attitude," a "certain stamp" of life which might be called "Christian character." Such considerations must remain secondary, he says, but they do have a place in a Christian ethic (DI, 168-69).

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area of the discussion is circumscribed by the provision that they are only different aspects of one unified life of love. By "individual" in the second sense, Brunner means an "individualistic" concern for developing one's own character without reference to other people. In this sense, there are no individual (individuell) virtues (DI, 166-67).

> A detailed doctrine of the New Birth would have to take note of the fact that the act of faith has a reflex influence upon the condition of the person in question....And faith extends its influence into this region of the factual habitual state just as much as sin does. (DI, 168)

Of course, the word which would summarize the quality of the character that grows out of faith is love.

The treatment of character in _Man in Revolt_, however, seems to retract much of what was said earlier in _The Divine Imperative_. In the later work, Brunner presents some thoughts that would seem to throw light on the question of character. But as we read on, we discover that these ideas do not apply to Christian character. In _Man in Revolt_ Brunner interprets character as "the empirical totality of man as act, understood as a unified act of decision" (MR, 302). This interpretation means that character is not something which a man inherits, it is not a natural endowment, but it is the result of self-determination. It is based on decision. Moreover, character and conduct are related in a two-way movement. In other words, character precedes and determines particular acts, but it is also the product of action, though not the automatic product of a number of specific actions. Character depends not upon the mere accumulation of a number of individual decisions, but upon a kind of fundamental decision which gives systematic unity to one's being; it establishes a "constitution."

> Character is a constitution of the self; it is a deliberate choice of a certain direction; it is self-determination for some particular purpose; and indeed it is "constitutive" fundamental self-decision.

> Character--even if only in a relative sense--is a total act; it is, to put it more correctly, the "constitution" which comes into being through a total act of this kind, out of which spring "as a result" further acts which are less "total" in character. (MR, 303)

Actions follow from character, not in any logical or causal sense, but as the spontaneous expression of the fundamental tendency of the will. Character arises as a history of many acts which involve a fundamental decision, not from a single act of decision. Since character has a certain permanence which is not easily reversed, the character tends to determine individual actions. However, character is not static, but relative and fluid. Thus every decision on a particular course of action is still an occasion for a fresh decision, even for a fundamental decision to change the direction of one's life (MR, 304-6).

The contrast of character as "fundamental decision" with the "partial decision" to do a particular act does not mean that the decision about character is absolutely total and absolutely fundamental. The totality of that decision is limited by the facts of creation and original sin (MR, 307). Because he is human and not merely an animal, man cannot evade decision, for even the flight into passivity is a decision. Nor can he transcend his humanity, his creatureliness; that is, he cannot decide to be God. A further limitation is placed upon his decision by his prior fundamental decision against God; because of his own "original sin," he can no longer decide that he will not be a sinner.

If Brunner had stopped here, he would have given us a substantial interpretation of the nature of character and a hint of the difference between Christian and non-Christian character. But the value of this description of character for Christian ethics is nullified when Brunner announces that "character" involves an element of deception, even deliberate self-deception. Thus character by its very nature is involved in sin.

> As soon as a human being becomes aware of his character and deliberately maintains his character, then necessarily he becomes a poseur. Character becomes a kind of mask, which one assumes...it is a part which one is playing. (MR, 310)

Brunner's point is that we are unable to will with perfect wholeness because of our sin; we remain divided and falsify ourselves when we are too self-conscious about character.

The problem with Brunner's interpretation is that it attributes to the notion of character itself the results of the misuse or misdirection of character. Thus Brunner can say that the man who does not engage in play acting, i.e., a person living in the love of God, would cease to have a "character." Character would be replaced by love.

> Men and women in whom Christ has taken form victoriously no longer possess a striking type of character; the only "striking" thing about them is their naturalness....We reach this faith only by laying aside the mask of character, by ceasing to "play a part" in life, by becoming wholly transparent, not only before God but also in the sight of man. (MR, 312)

What this conception means for the doctrine of Christian character is that there is no Christian character, for character implies the "feverish" effort and the pose of a man who is playing his part. We are "characters" only so long as, and in so far as, we are not in faith (MR, 316). The notion of character is still acceptable in a purely secular ethic, Brunner says. In the sphere of justitia civilis, where there are various degrees of good and evil within the limits of sinful human existence, the idea of character is useful; but it is destined to disappear in faith.

Brunner is cautiously guarding against man's claim to goodness as his own creation, and he is emphasizing the initiative of God as the source of true morality. But why must these concerns rule out the kind of carefully qualified consideration of character envisaged in The Divine Imperative? Is Brunner now reacting so strongly to the misuses of character in the history of ethics that he also reacts to the word itself? He avoids describing the nature of the new man in any detail because he does not want to give men something objective toward which to strive, relieving them of the necessity of listening to the personal address of God. He will not permit ethics to be dissolved into indicative statements about the spontaneous growth of the new man, but neither will he give detailed guidance about the inner structure of the new being. The new being does not merely happen, but neither can its essential nature be prescribed. But none of these reservations require the complete rejection of the idea of Christian character, nor can they justify what appears to be an absurd statement, that the Christian does not possess a character. It seems a notable weakness in

Brunner's thought that good men receive so little analysis in character terms, when they are so important to his system.

Because Brunner dismisses all secular ethics and most Catholic ethics as legalistic, he virtually excludes any possibility of learning anything about character from them. This is indeed unfortunate, for he cuts himself off from a historical body of philosophical and religious thought about the nature of the moral self, which he could have appropriated and re-interpreted in light of evangelical faith. He has likewise eliminated a significant group of recent philosophical works dealing with problems related to character, the adaption of which could greatly enrich Protestant ethical theory.[1] To adapt such materials without falling into the error of works-righteousness should hardly be more difficult than is Brunner's attempt to retain an understanding of man's participation in the act of faith without giving up the emphasis on the initiative of God, an effort which Brunner at least felt constrained to undertake.

Although Brunner hesitates and then refuses to call it Christian "character," Brunner's understanding of love serves the purpose of a rudimentary theory of Christian character. But his failure to develop this aspect of his thought leaves his ethic truncated at exactly that place where we would expect it to be most complete, given his assumption about the primacy of the "being" of the agent.

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[1] Stanley Hauerwas, in his doctoral dissertation, has done some interesting and suggestive work in relating these philosophical materials to theological ethics and in indicating the direction of a possible Protestant theory of Christian character. See Stanley Martin Hauerwas, "Moral Character as a Problem for Theological Ethics" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Dept. of Religious Studies, Yale University, 1968).

However, Brunner's limited treatment of the life of love makes clear his view that genuine morality is inseparably linked with religious experience. The self-determination of the moral agent's inner being by his response to God's gift of faith and love becomes the substance of a total way of life that unites the religious and the moral at the very core of existence. The entire being of the redeemed man, even to the depths of his subconscious, is involved in the progressive transformation resulting from religious conversion. Since this reordering affects the whole psychological nature of man, we might borrow a category from William K. Frankena and describe the moral level as the psychological level of the relation of religion and morality.

The reference to Frankena is an allusion to a provocative article in which he examines the relation of religion and morality.[1] I shall have occasion to refer to the article repeatedly in the following chapters. Frankena approaches the subject by questioning the validity of the familiar claim that morality is dependent upon religion. According to his analysis, the asserted dependence could mean any one of four kinds of dependent relationship--psychological, epistemological, genetic, or logical dependence.

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[1] William K. Frankena, "Public Education and the Good Life," Harvard Educational Review, XXXI (Fall, 1961), 413-26.

Since this chapter has dealt essentially with the psychological level of our question, a consideration of Brunner's response to Frankena's treatment of the idea of psychological dependence may prove a fitting conclusion. By psychological dependence Frankena means that "the *motivation* to be moral presupposes certain religious or theological beliefs."[1] Frankena denies that this contention has any plausibility if it is taken to mean that *no one ever* has *any* motivation to do what is right without being moved by a specifically religious conviction, and Brunner would undoubtedly agree. However, Frankena suggests another sense in which it may be true that morality is psychologically dependent upon religion; namely, that only a religious person will be completely moral, or at least come as close to the ideal as any mortal man can come. However, he fails to notice that "being completely moral" could be interpreted in two ways. Frankena means that even though a person may sometimes be moved to do the right external act with no religious motivation, he would not be sufficiently motivated to act rightly in all or even most situations unless he had religious reasons for doing so. This interpretation is purely psychological, concerned only with the question of what motives are required to move men to action; it is not at all concerned with the evaluation of these motives. In this sense, fear of hell is as much a religious motive as is love of God.

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 421.

Brunner would definitely affirm this assertion as rightly interpreting the facts of the human situation. The natural man may sometimes perform the right action spontaneously, but his behavior is not consistent (DI, 69). Because men are sinful and self-seeking, they refuse in countless instances to do what they know they ought to do. According to Brunner, no one will have sufficient motivation to enable him to overcome his innate self-centeredness and do what he ought in even the majority of cases unless he has a religious motivation, in the broadest sense of the term; that is, unless he acts either from love of God or from a legalistic desire to justify himself before God, and even the latter will finally prove insufficient.

But Frankena's statement could also be interpreted to mean that _no single act_, not to mention _all_ of anyone's actions, could be _completely_ moral without religious motivation, because having the right motive (i.e., a religious motive, or specifically, the motive of Christian love) is part of the total moral evaluation of the complete act. Brunner would insist that the goodness of the total action depends upon both the rightness of the external act itself and the goodness of the motive of the agent. For him, performing a _completely_ good moral act means not only doing the right external act, but also doing it from love or in faith (DI, 70, 84). There is only one duty, and that is the duty to love God and to be united with him in love of men. Unless an action is thus dedicated to God, Brunner says, it may be "useful, creative, or heroic," but it is "in no way holy or good" (DI, 133, 188). Because the unbeliever perceives the will of God in a broken sense through the law and the orders of creation, he can sometimes do the right external act in a given situation; but he can never do the full will of God because he knows only the law of God and not his command, and thus he must act legalistically and not from faith (DI, 115). Performing a completely good act is possible only to the man who in faith permits God to work through him (DI, 84). Therefore, complete moral goodness does not depend simply upon acting from _a_ religious motive, but upon acting from _the_ proper religious motive, namely, the love of God and faith in the God of Jesus Christ.

This second interpretation of Frankena's statement involves more than a merely descriptive psychological account of the mechanics of motivation; it concerns a moral evaluation of motives as well. The burden of this chapter has been the thesis that Brunner relates religion and morality on the moral level by asserting that faith is morality, i.e., that the _being_ of the moral agent, his disposition, and his motives are the essential elements in evaluating the morality of the man. The final test of morality or immorality for Brunner is the morality or immorality of the agent. Because this interpretation of psychological dependence goes beyond the purely descriptive psychology of motivation, the validity of this claim cannot be determined by purely scientific psychological studies of motivation. The final justification of Brunner's psychological claims rests upon the justification of his whole ethic, a question to which we must return in the last chapter. But the next question that I would like to raise is the question how the Christian who is psychologically moved by religious motives can determine what external acts are required of him. The next chapter will treat the method of Brunner's ethical reflection, since theological ethics can aid the believer in shaping his course of action on the moral level.

CHAPTER II

THEOLOGY AND ETHICS

In the first chapter I dealt with the moral level of the Christian life, which permitted an examination of the influence of religious commitments on moral commitments. I argued that the moral and the religious are inseparable for Brunner, since true morality consists in living a life responsive to the call and will of God. I further argued that the essential source of moral value in the Christian life is the loving disposition of the moral agent. But even though "real" moral value is located in the disposition, God also requires external action. The determination of what external acts God demands does not necessarily depend on ethical reflection, but ethical reflection can often guide the moral agent in perceiving the right action and can help explain why the action is right.

In this chapter I wish to examine Brunner's general treatment of the ethical level of Christian morality. The observation of the underlying theological assumptions which inform his theological ethic will assist me in tracing the logic of his ethical reasoning. One point becomes quite clear in a study of Brunner's ethic: the connection of theological ideas and ethical ideas is often more tacit than explicit. It will become increasingly evident both in this chapter and in subsequent chapters that theology and ethics are inextricably entwined in Brunner's thought. Although it is sometimes possible to sort out what is theological and what is ethical, there are many assertions and doctrines which are best described as theological and ethical.

The Categories of Brunner's Theological Ethic

The fundamental starting point for Brunner's theological ethic is enunciated in his statement that "the good is simply and solely the will of God" (DI, 56). The justification of that starting point must wait until the final chapter. The thrust of this chapter is the point that, given Brunner's assumption that God's will determines the good, what he thinks about the nature and the will of God will influence what he thinks about the good; that is, his theology will have ethical implications.

The fact that every good action is connected with the action of God means, according to Brunner, that the Christian ethic is necessarily connected with the science of dogmatics that reflects upon the divine action (DI, 84; D, III, 297). Brunner observes with approval that the New Testament is an indissoluble blend of "ethics" and "dogmatics," and that the same is true to a great extent in the important writings of the Reformation.

> Every theme of dogmatics is also inevitably a theme of ethics. Dogmatics does not exist independently,

> nor does ethics, but dogmatic knowledge as such always aims at existential, that is, ethical, thought, and ethical knowledge is rooted in knowledge of dogmatics. (DI, 84)

Ethics is only a section of dogmatics, or a "moment" within it. To separate ethics and theology would "lay dogmatics open to the danger of speculative abberations and ethics to the danger of moralistic distortions." Brunner's ethical writings presuppose the dogmatic system of which they form a part, for every theme of ethics must be referred to the whole doctrine of God (DI, 85-86, 152). As this section proceeds, it will become increasingly clear how closely ethics and theology are connected in Brunner's thought. To begin to lay bare this connection, we must return to examine what Brunner says about the good. We shall find ourselves beginning with Brunner's assumptions about the moral reality of the Christian life on which his general ethical theory is built.

According to Brunner the good in human action is that which God does in us and through us; human conduct is good only as it is set within the action of God. The good is simply what God wills that we should do at any particular moment (DI, 83-85, 117). As we noted in the previous chapter, Brunner discusses the Christian's perception of the will of God in terms of the Command of God. This language, which has theological and Biblical roots, reinforces other elements in Brunner's theology which predispose his ethic to the idea of an immediate, particular command of God. His whole theology is oriented toward an understanding of God as one who acts and wills; it is not God's being that most occupies Brunner's attention, but his activity. God's action is his movement toward man in love. Since Brunner conceives of God as an active being who comes to man, it is not surprising that he should think of him as one who meets men in the moment of ethical decision. Instead of referring to God as the "ground of ethical truth and moral obligation," Brunner prefers to speak primarily in active terms--God is one who commands.

Brunner's preference for the command language is also fostered by his aversion to legalism. An ethic of principles is much more vulnerable to legalistic distortion than is an ethic that exalts the moment by moment personal moral command. Thus Brunner says that even the law of love understood as law is not really God's command. If love becomes a "principle" to be interpreted by man, then the Christian has reverted to legalism. Love is free from all predefinition; it cannot know the good beforehand, but must await the particular command of God (DI, 117, 134, 144).

I pointed out in the last chapter that for Brunner legalism involves both the rule character of legal morality and the use of the rules in efforts at self-justification. Both aspects of legalism are opposed by Brunner's theological conception of God. The rule aspect infringes upon the freedom of God (DI, 83, 122). Furthermore, legalism signifies man's attempt to usurp the sovereignty of God by placing man in control of his destiny and therefore on equal footing with God. Man's feeling that he can know and realize the good himself leads him to attempt self-justification and results in the denial of Brunner's conviction that the good is always the gift of God. Finally, legalism violates the personal dimension of the moment of the command by placing an abstract law between man and God (DI, 68-75). Legal morality is always impersonal, whereas the ethic of the command means that God himself turns personally toward his creatures (DI, 198-99).

This last point leads to one of the most distinctive features of Brunner's theological system, his personalistic epistemology. Brunner's view of revelation as a personal encounter between a human "I" and a divine "Thou" prompted, or at least supports, the idea of a concrete divine command and sustains his denunciation of legalism. Since God is not known abstractly but only where he personally makes himself known in a Divine-human encounter, knowledge of the will of God also depends upon the personal word of God, which Brunner describes as hearing the divine command. Because God's command is wholly personal, it is wholly concrete. God calls a particular person to do some definite action (DI, 73, 198).

Brunner's insistence upon the immediacy of the command of God leaves the impression of indeterminancy and may seem to eliminate the need for ethical reflection. It may appear that the Christian could easily dispense with the ethical level and merely listen for the command of God on the moral level. Brunner decries as legalistic any attempt to draft a system of casuistry which codifies divine laws and specifies their application. Christian ethics cannot, therefore, tell us what we are to do; it would be an ethic based on law and abstract principles if it could do so (DI, 90-91).

However, if God is a free and sovereign God who speaks to individual men personally, he is also a consistent God whose will is not capricious but exhibits a continuity with his previous commands. Brunner is not saying that all ethical reflection is illegitimate; his concern is simply to delimit carefully the sphere of competency of such reflection. Ethics can never provide certainty about what ought to be done, but it can "prepare the way" for the hearing of the command of God. It cannot establish general laws, but it can make occasional suggestions (DI, 91, 339). Ultimately the moment of hearing the command is an individual matter which no reflection can predict with absolute certainty; but penultimately a great deal can be said about the command (DI, 112).

> By itself ethics can decide nothing beforehand; nothing at all. But, by the consideration of all the points of view which have to be considered by one who knows God's grace...it can prepare the decision of the individual as carefully as a conscientious legal advisor prepares the decision of the judge by the most careful consideration of all possibilities. (DI, 139)

Brunner considers extreme antinomianism, which holds that it is impossible to lay down any rules at all and to have any knowledge beforehand about the content of the divine command, to be just as dangerous and just as unjustifiable on theological grounds as is legalistic orthodoxy.

Brunner indicates the means by which God's will is revealed by introducing several related concepts. Before we proceed to a more detailed examination of the process of his ethical reasoning, let us pause briefly to note some of the key categories that he will employ in his ethic. One of Brunner's basic theological premises that holds for both theology and ethics is the idea that God's word comes only through the Scripture and the Spirit. Scripture is the general source of illumination and the final test for all theological and ethical truth. But the Bible is a tangible instrument for "perceiving the Divine Command" only in so far as it becomes the word of God for each individual through the Spirit.

> As the Scripture without the Spirit produces false legalism, orthodoxy, so the Spirit without the Scriptures produces false Antinomianism, and fanaticism. (DI, 92)

The specificity of the will of God is discerned, in light of the Bible as expounded by the Spirit, by an examination of God's work as Creator and Redeemer, the threefold use of the law, the doctrine of the orders of creation, and the related doctrine of the calling and office.

God the Creator and Redeemer

One "indication" or "point of view" which gives some specification to the divine command comes from the theological knowledge that it is God the Creator and Redeemer who calls men into his service. Although Brunner insists that ultimately the will of God is only one, his work as Creator differs from his work as Redeemer. This two-faceted doctrine of God becomes one of the organizing principles for Brunner's theological ethic. Brunner moves from his theological understanding of the twofold aspect of God's nature revealed in his activity in the world to the twofold nature of Christian moral responsibility. This move is based on the tacit assumption that the will of God corresponds to the nature and work of God, that his will is consistent with his action.

The world as we have it is the result of the creative activity of God, whereas the goal toward which all existence tends reflects the purpose of the Redeemer. God's command for the actual moment reaches us through the world which he has created; the theological knowledge that this world was created and is maintained by God leads to the ethical principle that the historical situation "must be regarded primarily as God's Command, telling us to adjust ourselves to it." The first duty of the Christian, then, is to adapt himself to the world which God the Creator has given him (DI, 208, 122-25, 214).

But the world which God created is now marred by sin, so that this world is not really the world which he created; hence his will is never directly expressed in it.

> Nothing real exists in this world which is not willed by God; but there is also nothing in this world which God does not also not will. He wills it in so far as

> it is His creation; He does not will it in so far as in it the form of creation has been distorted and spoilt by sin. (DI, 126)

This evaluation of the condition of the historical world rests upon the theological and ethical view that sin both distorts the personality of the individual man and corrupts the social institutions that men create. But even apart from sin, the historical world does not express the full will of God, because God the Redeemer wills to fulfill and perfect his creation. Since God is not satisfied with the world because of its sinfulness and its human temporality, the Christian also does not merely accept the world as it is; rather, he must "share in the work of the 'new creation' through the command of the Redeemer" (DI, 127-28). Thus the Christian's second duty is to ignore the historically given situation and to "inaugurate a new line of action in view of the coming Kingdom of God" (DI, 208).

The Threefold Law

Another of the concepts which indicates something of the content of the will of God is the idea of the law and its three functions. The idea of divine law presupposes a theological model of a divine legislator who makes known in general terms his demands and prohibitions. Brunner does not seem to feel that this model reveals the nature of God as he is in himself eternally, but as he acts in relation to the historical world his will does partake of the nature of law. The law is so important for ethics that

Brunner even says that only on the basis of the law can the individual hear the divine command (DI, 198). The knowledge of the law is to some extent a common human possession which can guide even those who do not understand its theological basis.

Brunner uses the Latin word Lex to refer to the first use of the law, which is traditionally designated the "civil use" of the law. The Lex is the law in its legal aspect; it exists for the purpose of maintaining "law and order." Brunner expands on the idea of law in such a way that it becomes quite similar to the doctrine of the orders of creation, since Lex includes the historically developed institutionalized social structures that are maintained by force of habit, custom, and coercion.

> We describe the sum-total of all these forms of connexion between human beings, in so far as they are also--on the one hand--subject to the control of the will, and--on the other--primarily simply effective as present forces for the maintenance of order, by the artificial word: Lex. (DI, 141)

Lex is only indirectly the will of God for us, but God uses even this rude, coercive, arbitrary, and external authority to preserve the world, which is tainted by sin and threatened by chaos (DI, 142).

Since God is in his essence a God of love, he would ideally desire that such harsh measures were not necessary; but given the sinfulness of the world, coercive legal authority is necessary to maintain human life; the Lex, therefore, is indirectly required by love. Even the Christian needs to have his life ordered to some extent by Lex because of his remaining tendency to sin. But even if he did not need it himself, the Christian ought to obey the law for the sake of those who do need it (DI, 142-43). The Lex by which God restrains man's sinfulness and maintains order seems to consist of the orders of creation and the Biblical commandments in so far as they are considered in their legal aspect.

In its second use, the law is a judge which condemns man and leads him to repentance. This function of the law is traditionally known as the "pedagogical" use of the law, based on Paul's reference to the law as a "schoolmaster to bring us to Christ" (DI, 143).[1] It is somewhat difficult to determine the exact nature of the law that judges man and hence leads him to Christ. On the one hand, Brunner implies that the will of God in the absolute sense is that which condemns man; that is, it is the real will of God as opposed to the legal requirements of his will expressed in the Lex that serves to lead to repentance. No one fulfills the requirement of loving God with "an undivided heart," and Brunner uses the word "law" to designate the measure of judgment for this failure. But other passages imply that it is the legal aspect of the law which God uses to lead men to repentance. In any case, the real lesson to be learned through the law is that God's real will is more radical than all law, and that the law as legal demand is really an enemy of the true knowledge of God's will. The law in its second use leads finally to the knowledge that the law as a legal understanding of God is sinful (DI, 145-46).

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[1] The term pedagogical is perhaps somewhat misleading today because it has become virtually synonymous with "educational" in English usage, which tends to confuse the second with the third use of the law. The "pedagogue" of whom Paul speaks was not a "schoolmaster," but a trusted slave who had among his duties the responsibility of escorting the son of his master to his teacher.

Although the judging function of the law still applies to the Christian in so far as he is also an unbeliever in constant need of daily repentance, it is the third use of the law that is most important for Christian morality. This third use, the "didactic" use of the law, signifies the function of the law for the believer *qua* believer. It is a "God-given exposition of what it means for our conduct to be 'in Christ'" (DI, 148). But now the law is no longer the *Lex*, the legal demand, but the guidance which is consistent with an evangelical ethic. The demand of the law is no longer the legal obligation of servant to master, but the instruction of father to son. When Brunner speaks of the third use of the law in *The Divine Imperative*, he omits mention of that portion of the law that is similar to the orders of creation, i.e., the obligation inherent in social structures. Whether this omission is intentional or inadvertent is not clear. But in discussing the instructive function of the law, he refers only to the divine commandments revealed in scripture, especially to the law of love as expounded in the Sermon on the Mount (DI, 148-50).

However, he does say that the law that guides--the third use--is the same as the civil law radically interpreted from the point of view of love. This statement suggests the possibility of a "third use of the orders" parallel to the third use of the law. I will discuss the concept of the orders more fully shortly, but a word on the subject is in order here, since Brunner's threefold view of the law gives some indication of the way he thinks the orders operate. Brunner's use of the concept of the orders in ethical reflection seems quite similar especially to the first and third uses of the law. As the rough structures which hold the consequences of sin in check, the orders fulfill the requirements of the first use of the law. As the God-given guidance for the Christian's social responsibility, they function "didactically."

Of course, neither the law nor the orders function as final and absolute authorities. They are only instruments through which the Holy Spirit can speak. But if they are not taken as final principles which assure knowledge of the genuinely good, then the law and the orders in their third use, including the law of love expressed in the Sermon on the Mount, can be a source of illumination for the agent in the concrete situation of decision (DI, 148-49). Behind this conception of the third use of the law is the theological idea of a God who expresses his will in divine law, yet a God who remains free and sovereign in telling men personally how that law applies to their particular situation.

The Orders of Creation

Although Brunner repeatedly refers to the law as a source of guidance for human decision, he describes that source of illumination more often in terms of the orders of creation, an idea based on the theological conception of God as Creator. Brunner derives the idea of the orders from the Scriptures through the mediation of Calvin and Luther and perhaps more immediately through the later tradition of Lutheranism. Whatever the historical source which first introduced Brunner to this kind of thinking, he feels that the idea is grounded in the Bible.

The created order, in the broadest sense, includes the totality of the ordered structure that God gave to the world in his creation of it, including both human social institutions and the scientific or descriptive laws of nature. In the latter sense, the orders are operative "in the whole sphere of sub-human life, in the life of the lilies of the field...and in that of the birds of the air...." (DI, 220). In the same sense, the biological laws which govern the life of man are part of the created order (DI, 209). But Brunner usually uses the phrase "created order" in a narrower sense to refer to those structures of human social existence which would not exist except as men willfully and consciously cooperate. The orders of creation in this sense are the social groupings which spring from man's nature as a social being (DI, 291, 335).

Jesus' statement that man and woman were intended from creation for a permanent union in marriage and Paul's assertion that the state was ordained by God provide the Biblical basis for the idea of social orders. Brunner defines these "communal orders," the orders of creation "in the narrower sense," as

> those existing facts of human life which lie at the root of all historical life as unalterable presuppositions, which, although their historical forms may vary, are unalterable in their fundamental structure, and, at the same time, relate and unite men to one another in a definite way. (DI, 210)

Without such social orders, human life would be impossible. Hence the orders are the gift of God for the purpose of maintaining human social existence; the orders check the inevitable tendency of humanity to disintegrate into atoms (DI, 220-21, 337). The orders have nothing to do with salvation, but they are the gift of the gracious God; hence this ethical doctrine is related to the theological distinction between preserving grace and redemptive grace (D, II, 154). God's will as Creator and Preserver approaches us through the framework of the orders, so that Brunner can say that "without the order of creation, no one can perceive the concrete command of God" (DI, 339, 353-54).

In developing his doctrine of the orders, Brunner makes two distinctions which must not be neglected. First, he distinguishes between the "orders of creation" and the "orders of preservation" (DI, 212-13). Whereas the orders of creation exist by virtue of God's original creation, the orders of preservation are only necessary because the incursion of human sin into God's creation required an alteration in God's means of governing the world. As examples of the orders of preservation Brunner cites the institutions of the state and the law, in this case the "civil law." Brunner acknowledges that the tendency of man to achieve a kind of national community is given in the order of creation. But the aspect of force and coercion, which Brunner says belongs to the essence of the state, was required only by man's sin; for this reason, Brunner describes the state, which is a product of collective sin, as an order of preservation rather than as an order of creation (DI, 444-45). The distinction is important because it reveals something of Brunner's low opinion of the state, or rather his low opinion of the men whom the state must govern. However, the function of the orders of preservation is not really so different from the function of the orders of creation.

The second distinction, however, is of great ethical significance. The distinction, which unfortunately Brunner does not delineate as carefully as it deserves, is between the "orders of creation" or "primal orders" and the "existing orders" or the "real" or "actual" orders. The phrase "existing orders" refers to actual historical manitestations of the orders of creation and preservation (DI, 217-18). The created order in the strictest sense apparently is the fundamental structure which lies behind the "existing facts" (DI, 210, 337). Brunner never speaks of a created order as an ideal abstracted from the concrete reality of an existing order; the orders are embedded in the world and represent divinely intended social functions which must be accomplished in a variety of social situations. The existing orders, as the actual embodiment of these functions, do not perfectly reflect God's intentions, since the human factor, including sin, has entered into their formation. The "real" or "corrupted" orders are thus not God's created order (DI, 214-16, 221; MR, 531).

> It is true that the unalterable fundamental forms of these orders are the gift of the Creator and Preserver of the world; but the forms in which they appear at any given time, which is constantly changing their historically concrete form, is the effect of human sin, and is therefore, like all that is sinful, the object of conflict. (DI, 337-38).

Since the existing orders have been created through the "natural psycho-physical powers of men," they have not necessarily been created aright; therefore, no existing order can ever be identified with God's will (DI, 127, 335-39).

The distinction between created and existing orders is fairly clear in principle; its ethical application is more difficult. Unfortunately for the clarity of his thought, Brunner does not always make sufficiently clear which meaning of order he intends when he uses the word without the modifier. He often seems to let the distinction slip completely, thereby granting as much imperatival force to existing orders as to created orders.

The Calling and the Office

Closely related to Brunner's concept of the orders of creation, and derived from it, is the doctrine of the calling and office. By the calling in the general sense Brunner means that man is summoned by God to live and act in the midst of the sinful world and in the particular place where he finds himself. The theological affirmations that God has created and preserves the world despite its sin and that God himself does not disdain to use the historical world imply that we are called to live and act in this unholy world with a good conscience and with cheerfulness, since we are forgiven and given grace to act in it (DI, 210, 243).

The office designates the special role and task assigned to one by his life within the calling. "To act in his 'office' means to act in accordance with the legal obligations imposed by the 'orders'" (DI, 222). One's official capacity as judge, policeman, bank official, citizen, or parent may change the moral requirements that would be his as a private individual apart from the office. The official duty may be harsh, perhaps even requiring the use of force, possibly even to the point of taking life; but one's official duty must be done, because it is necessary for the maintenance of the legal "dyke which protects human life from the irruption of chaos" (DI, 224-26).

The calling and office are functions of our role within the orders and hence derive from the creative work of God. Thus we can observe that the conceptual schemes of the law, the orders, and the office are mutually related and together are related to Brunner's doctrine of God. As Creator, God bids us accept the world and our particular place in it with its legal responsibilities, and he calls us to work on the basis of what is given. But as Redeemer he commands us to ignore the existing orders and to act as citizens of another kingdom. Even apart from sin, the will of God as Creator is not the last word, for God wills to perfect the world which he created. But especially because of the broken condition of his order due to sin, God wills that we cooperate with him in creating something new (DI, 214-15). Let us now examine in more detail how these ideas are developed in Brunner's process of ethical reflection.

Brunner's Method of Ethical Reasoning

In so far as we are able to prepare for the divine command, our expectations are conditioned by our perception of the demands of the orders and the requirements of our calling. But the problem for ethics and for moral decision is that we often do not encounter a single unambiguous demand, but two or more demands which seem to conflict with one another. This apparent conflict of duties receives considerable attention in ethical reflection. The following treatment of the logic of Brunner's ethical reasoning involves the continuation and expansion of Dale Burrington's provocative and constructive analysis of the question of conflicts of duty in Brunner's writings.[1] I think that we can discern in Brunner's works three kinds of possible conflict of duty situations: (1) the conflict that arises when the duties inherent in two different offices conflict; (2) the conflict that develops between the demands of one's office and the requirements of love; and (3) the conflict that occurs between the requirements imposed by an "existing order" and the requirements of an "order of creation." Each of these conflicts involves contradictory ethical claims, each of which is related ultimately to one or another aspect of Brunner's understanding of God. Let us consider in some detail each of the situations of conflict.

Conflicting Official Duties

The level on which Burrington conducts his investigation is that of conflicting requirements of two different offices, a problem which Brunner touches upon briefly. In his treatment Brunner says that there can be no real conflict of duties, for there are no duties apart from obeying the concrete command of God; hence all conflict is only apparent. Burrington handles the problem of apparent conflicts of duty by importing W. D. Ross's useful distinction between "*prima facie* duty" and "actual duty." A *prima facie* duty, according to Ross, indicates the property of tending to be a duty, or possessing "right making" characteristics, which would constitute one's actual duty in the absence of conflicting prima facie duties. One's actual duty is, of course, what one really ought to do. Translated into Brunner's scheme, prima facie duty indicates those requirements of the orders and office which we would tend to expect God to command in the absence of any conflict among these demands. Our actual duty is what God does in fact command. We are faced with a "sense of conflicting duties" (to use Brunner's terminology) or with a real conflict of prima facie duties (to use Ross's vocabulary) when the several offices in which we serve demand contradictory actions. Burrington poses Kant's problem of the benevolent lie in order to illustrate the problem of a conflict of duties. Unfortunately, he does not examine Brunner's response to this particular problem.

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[1] Burrington, *Scottish Journal of Theology*, XX, 149-64.

Burrington concludes that Brunner's solution to conflict of duty situations requires that the agent consider carefully the various claims which impinge upon him from his various offices, and in the pressure of the "apparent conflict of duties" and in light of his "schedule of duties" the agent must reach a decision of faith concerning God's command in that situation. In contrast to Ross, who feels that we must do our actual duty with a sense of regret that we were unable to satisfy all our prima facie obligations, Brunner says that we must do what we think we must do and regard that as our God-given duty. God will assume the responsibility for our action if we act in faith, so that we need not, indeed we should not, feel tragic about the necessary neglect of other prima facie duties. "How can it be 'tragic' to obey God?" Brunner asks (DI, 205).

Burrington's article is interesting and illuminating, but there are some problems in his interpretation of Brunner, and there are problems in Brunner's thinking that Burrington fails to observe. In intentionally limiting the scope of the analysis to the problem of conflict between the duties of two offices, Burrington has overlooked the more significant sources of conflict which we shall examine later. Indeed, it was his failure to examine Brunner's response to the particular issue of the benevolent lie that caused him to overlook other kinds of conflict, since Brunner's treatment of the benevolent lie involves a different kind of conflict than the conflict between two offices.

Moreover, with regard to Brunner's own thought, the resolution of conflict between official duties is fraught with more serious difficulties than either Brunner or Burrington realize. The major source of problems is Brunner's failure to develop clearly a description of the way in which the idea of the office operates in ethical and moral reflection. In the first place, it is often difficult to know what are the prima facie requirements of a given office without some further knowledge of the rules that govern that role in society. Brunner apparently assumes that we do possess such knowledge, but he never acknowledges that the source of our expectations concerning given social roles is the rules of conventional morality. Failing to recognize this, Brunner gives the idea of the office both too much credit and too little credit. Because he discusses the demands of social roles in the theological terminology of office and calling instead of in the mundane terms of the rules of conventional morality, he gives the notion of the *prima facie* duty of an office a more august and awesome authority than is warranted and makes it appear that the *prima facie* duties of an office are clearly evident. In reality, it is often difficult to determine what one's *prima facie* obligations are, and it is even more difficult to do so when the obligations are supposed to inhere somehow in an "office" than when they are expressed in terms of conventional rules. On the other hand, Brunner gives too little credit to the notion of the office and to conventional morality in his remarks implying that the sphere of the official is an unwelcome necessity which interferes with the really important sphere of the personal.

But perhaps the greatest weakness of putting too much stress on the concept of the office is that it obscures the fact that many of our duties are not official duties. Many of our obligations do not depend upon our station in life, but arise simply from the fact that we are human beings. Of course an understanding of the requirements of our various roles is ethically and morally significant, but we should not overlook those more general obligations that do not depend upon our official status. In Kant's problem of telling a lie, conflict arises when one must tell a lie in order to save someone else's life, but it is by no means clear that the obligation to tell the truth nor the obligation to save a life depends upon one's office. Rather both seem to be general human duties, both being requirements of love. The conflict here seems to be that between two divergent demands of love, a fourth possible kind of "conflict of duties," which Brunner hints at himself. However, we will not consider this possibility further, since Brunner does not develop his ethic in this direction.

Brunner seems to have been at least somewhat aware of the limitations of the structure of his ethic, including an awareness that the orders and the offices do not adequately define all our duties. A part of our social life is neatly organized into fairly clearly defined orders and offices--the state, the economy, the family, and the church. But other aspects of our lives are not so easily categorized, and Brunner's general category which he calls the "order of culture" is testimony to his realization that not all of life falls into neat arrangements. Even if the idea of the orders proves a useful technique for dealing with some ethical problems and situations, it is not an all-sufficient method. Brunner's inclusion of the catchall category of the order of culture is a function of schematic requirements rather than the result of a desire to understand and characterize the nature of our moral experience. The order of culture and the repeated references to the law and especially to the Sermon on the Mount may have been intended to compensate for the duties not accounted for by the orders and offices.

The Conflict of Love and the Orders

Much more significant than the conflict between two offices or callings is the apparent conflict of the requirements of the orders and offices with the general commandment of love. A theological tension within the idea of God lies behind this ethical conflict, for God is both the one who loves and requires that men love and the God of order who requires adherence to the loveless existing orders. Love and the orders are not, of course, always in conflict, but they are often at cross purposes because, as Brunner says, the orders are necessarily harsh and hence "incurably loveless" and "contrary to the law of love" (DI, 233). The orders constitute an "alien element" which does not harmonize with the command of love. Since the realm of the orders is "inherently loveless," an insoluble dualism exists between the law of the orders and the command of love (DI, 222-26).

By far the most important source of the conflict can be traced to the fact that sin has so hardened the orders as to render them harsh, rough, and unloving, and therefore only "very indirectly in accordance with the command of love" (DI, 224). The orders must be tough and coarse in order to protect humanity from the final consequences of sin. The conflict of duties involving the opposition of the love commandment to the requirements of an unloving order constitutes a far more serious problem for Brunner than the conflict of duty arising from the contradictory demands of different orders or offices. Burrington's problem involved a conflict within the level of the orders; the issue which I am raising involves a conflict between the level of the orders and the level of the one command to love. The question now is how this latter conflict is to be resolved.

Brunner would begin to answer this question by saying that the Christian must for the sake of love do what the orders require; this is the Christian's first duty, based on what God wills as Creator (DI, 208, 214). The Christian's first duty is his official duty, for "even the historically 'given' must be regarded primarily as God's Command, telling us to adjust ourselves to it" (DI, 125). However, it is interesting to observe this difference of attitude when comparing this resolution of this conflict with that of the conflict of official duties: whereas the Christian can resolve the "apparent" conflict of two or more official duties and set about his task with joyfulness, the decision that love requires acting in accordance with an "inherently loveless" order need not exclude a sense of pain that such an unloving act is required. Quite to the contrary, the "almost" tragic and painful awareness of the contrast between love and what one must do is not only permissible, but appropriate, and perhaps even mandatory (DI, 223-25).

The Christian has "no right to close his eyes or shut his heart to anything by means of which love is injured by the 'orders'" (DI, 218). Brunner says that the contrast between what God wills and "what we do ourselves, in our 'official' capacity" (and by this he means what we must do and ought to do in our official capacity) is always culpable and terrible (DI, 227). It is true that he talks about executing our duties with cheerfulness and with a clear conscience in spite of the fact that to do so we must use dubious means (DI, 254); but he also insists,

> The genuine character of the faith of a Christian may be judged by the intensity (or lack of it) with which he is conscious of the contrast between what he has to do as a citizen, officially, and what the God of love "actually" wills....Therefore the way in which a Christian speaks those harsh necessities of social life shows very clearly whether his faith is genuine or not; if he speaks about them in a hard way, like a pagan Roman, or as one who himself groans under them and grieves that he has to do such things: in the one instance or the other he shows "what manner of spirit he is of." (DI, 275)

Thus in so far as the Christian must, for the sake of love, perform a loveless act in accordance with his office, he may do so with a heavy heart, sharing, I suppose, the pain of God who must require of men something contrary to what he would ideally will for men (DI, 217, 481).

Brunner's idea that "loveless" official duty should be done with a heavy heart seems to be in keeping with the idea of love as sympathetic concern for the other man, but the position seems inconsistent with what he said about conflicting official duties. If God does command an unloving act for which he assumes the responsibility, then it would seem that the Christian should feel no more and no less sorrowful in performing it than he does in having to neglect some of his official duties when they conflict with other official duties, for in this case also we could ask, "How can it be tragic to obey God?" But if the cause of regret that accompanies the performance of a necessary unloving act is the sorrow that the world is such that one cannot act lovingly, then it would seem that one could equally regret that the world is so made that one cannot fulfill all his official duties. Why the heavy heart is permissible in the one case and not in the other is not at all clear.

Brunner's first response to the conflict between love and the orders which I have been discussing involves the acquiescence of love to the demands of the orders, "for the sake of love." But even though we are committed to sharing in the work of preservation according to the command of the Creator, we are also committed to participating in the Redeemer's work of the new creation, and this means a critical and challenging attitude toward the world in its present state. The task of the Redeemer in working to perfect the world in accordance with his love is the attempt to bring to fruition the intention of the Creator. Love is the basis of the creation and the command of love is the final norm of the orders. Brunner rejects emphatically as a "disastrous dogma" the idea of "a certain kind of Lutheranism" that the orders are not subject to the command of Jesus Christ, but only to the rule of reason. He says that it is completely false to assert that in the sphere of the orders Christ has nothing to say (DI, 127-29, 217-18, 227-29).

We can find in Brunner's writings suggestions of two ways in which the Christian can bring love to bear on the orders. The first involves working for alterations which will "create a better and a more righteous order" (DI, 225). The second involves the search for ways in which to express love in the personal relationships to which one is led by virtue of living within the orders. Let us postpone the discussion of the second until a later point in this chapter. With regard to the first, Brunner makes a number of important statements in The Divine Imperative implying that love stands over the orders and requires significant reforms in the structure of the orders themselves.

> [The existing orders] form the vessel which we are to fill with the content of love. We have just said that the first thing necessary is not to alter this vessel but to fill it with the new content. But there are vessels which are contrary to this content of love, and it is quite possible that such vessels ought to be smashed. Where the existing order is no longer useful but harmful, it is ripe for destruction. (DI, 218)

The Christian will sometimes have to protest against the lovelessness of the order and "seek to realize a better order" (DI, 339). Although all existing orders have, by virtue of their very existence, some imperatival force inherent in them, it is still clear that some orders are better than others, and that none is wholly good and none wholly bad (DI, 213, 233). Some cases are so extreme that a person can "no longer participate in such action as his calling demands, if the calling can never be regarded as subject to the grace of God" (DI, 254). Thus even though cooperation with others for the glory of God and the good of our neighbor is our first principle, there are also occasions when we must refuse to cooperate with others (DI, 255).

The resolution of the conflict between the ideal of love and the requirements of the orders and office is never an easy one; above all, it is not something that can be decided in abstraction from a concrete situation requiring judgment. Yet looking at the whole body of Brunner's writings, one can hardly avoid the conclusion that the scales are definitely weighted on the side of the orders. Brunner asserts that the Christian ethic is always a conservative ethic (in the literal sense of an ethic which conserves) and always a revolutionary ethic. But his "revolutionary" remarks are always hedged about with considerable qualifications, and on the whole one is left with the feeling that he is more ready to tolerate the present order than to risk change. In theological terms, the concern of God the Creator to preserve order prevails over the desire of God the Redeemer to recreate the world on the basis of love.

Brunner rightly maintains that the right of revolution is a most exceptional case (DI, 449-50, 618). But the fact that he seems to polarize the possibilities for change into the extreme cases of "conserving the present order" and "revolution," without paying more careful attention to the possibility of gradual reform, pushes his ethic in a conservative direction. Thus he frequently warns the Christian who wishes to bring about a better order that a real order, even an unjust one which maintains order and prevents anarchy, is best unless a better order can be immediately realized "without any break in continuity" (DI, 230, 224, 449). Moreover, he says that the individual is responsible for improving an order only to the extent to which that task falls within his official duty, though the role as citizen does give everyone some share in making the social order better (DI, 203, 229). Faith does require us to "search for ways to make the official order itself more just, more humane, more full of the spirit of love," but Brunner adds a characteristic qualification that the reform of the order is to be pursued only so far as it can be accomplished "without unfitting it for the purpose for which it exists as an order" (DI, 233).

The tension between the old and the new, between the orders and love, is built into Brunner's system, and it would be unfair to ignore either element. But taking his writings as a whole, I am compelled to conclude that he is more fearful of the possible harmful consequences accompanying change than he is optimistic about the possibilities of reform. Because of his preoccupation with the sinfulness of man and the world, any thought of change raises the spectre of anarchy. Perhaps this message of the sinfulness of man and the corruption of human institutions was the word that was most needed during the early years of Brunner's career, and it is an emphasis that should not be lost by contemporary thinkers. But Brunner's excessive stress on the forces resisting moral progress not only undermines the moral determination to make the world a better place, but it also denies the historically manifest fact that mankind does progress as well as regress.

Brunner's dismal attitude regarding the prospects for social improvement is most marked in his treatment of the state. His fear of anarchy and his general pessimism inhibit serious reflection on the reform of the state in the interest of justice and love; and his essentially negative evaluation of the function of the state, combined with his fear of centralization and bigness in general, hinders any inclination to look to the state as an agent for reform. Brunner seems to feel that the Christian faith is more conservative than reforming, more otherworldly than temporally relevant. He compares the mission of the church to that of a besieged fortress. The church must hold the fortress, not expecting any overwhelming transformation of the world. God will secure the victory in his own good time. The reformation of the orders is not ruled out entirely, but that task is secondary and largely indirect (DI, 233, 287-88, 457, 464; JSO, 104).

The Conflict of Existing and Created Orders

In addition to the conflict of duty situations which we have already considered, we must also observe the conflict between the demands of concrete "existing" orders and the "created" orders which represent God's intention for the orders. It is God the Creator's intention to order the world in such a way that men are brought into harmonious organization, fulfilling in cooperation with one another the social tasks of civilized life. The theological presupposition behind this interpretation of God's intention is the conviction that God is a God of order who desires to have an orderly world. But Brunner likewise presupposes the idea of a God who willed to create a world of beings relatively independent of himself; he did not will to create a world that was merely an extention of himself, but one in which his creatures could freely choose for or against him. In ethical terms, this view of God implies that men are also free to choose for or against God's order.

This is not to say, however, that men are entirely free to dispense with God's intention for an orderly world. Just as men are not free to destroy completely their destiny, i.e., they cannot cease to be responsible beings, so also men are not free to divest themselves of all social order. God continues to order human society in some way in spite of man's rebellion. But the existing orders are not what God had originally intended for the orders in his creation of them.

In so far as the existing orders fail to conform to the structure of the intended order of creation, Brunner has the basis for judging an existing order contrary to the will of God and for urging that it be reformed so that it does embody more fully God's intention. This approach seems to be one element in Brunner's critique developed in The Divine Imperative. Although the section of that book concerned with general principles suggests the role of love as critic of the existing order, the section dealing with specific social problems exhibits the predominance of this third kind of conflict. So predominant is this approach in his special ethic that only in the case of divorce does Brunner appeal to love as the overriding factor in the moral deliberation (DI, 361). In Justice and the Social Order the critique of the existing orders in light of the created order becomes the fundamental basis for the criticism of social institutions. There Brunner speaks of the "primal" order of God, which he contrasts with existing social institutions.

But determining what the intended created order is, as contrasted with the corresponding existing order, is a difficult task. However, I would argue that Brunner's "created orders" or "primal orders" are best interpreted in terms of their function or purpose. Brunner does not seem to conceive of an ideal state or an ideal economic arrangement toward which the existing orders should strive; rather, the created order seems to mean the function served by the social structures that organize human beings.

Taken in this sense, the idea of functional orders is supported by common sense analysis and sociological analysis of the structural requirements of human social life. An examination of human society and of the history of social organization uncovers some fundamental types of social organization which seem necessary for societal living. It is these natural functions which Brunner seeks to incorporate in his doctrine of the orders. To be specific, communal life seems to require some kind of family structure, some kind of functional authority that might be called government, some type of economic organization of life, and, in most societies, some kind of religious structure. These functions correspond roughly to Brunner's orders of the family, economy, state, and church. His category of culture is a loose conglomerate category to cover other aspects of social arrangement and cooperation, including art, science, education, friendship, and custom. In a traditional society, in the sociological sense of the phrase, these functions are largely undifferentiated. In many primitive societies the larger family, the clan, encompasses the economic, religious, and political functions. In rationalized societies of more advanced cultures the roles are differentiated, i.e., the social functions are largely distinct and are accomplished by different institutions. Brunner does not explicitly attempt to establish his doctrine of the orders by this kind of historical and sociological analysis, but he does seem to think that his orders reflect the organizational structures that are functionally necessary for social life and that do exist in contemporary civilized societies.

If this interpretation of Brunner is correct, then the value of an existing order is determined by its effectiveness in performing its function, not by its correspondence to an ideal model. Thus an economic order that is really "anarchy," which was Brunner's assessment of capitalism, is such a perversion of the divine order of creation that the Christian is obliged to fight against it in order to secure a real order (DI, 424-27, 431). Moreover, the function of the state is to create order, but built into the function is the limitation that the state should create order in such a way as to make possible the functioning of the other orders. Therefore the totalitarian state, which usurps all spheres of life under its control, has overstepped the function for which it was created and is in need of reform (DI, 458). Even the idea of a hierarchically arranged family structure based on monogamous marriage does not seem to function like an ideal in the Platonic sense; rather, I think Brunner views it as the best arrangement for the fulfillment of the function of the family unit, just as a federalistic democracy and a modified capitalism seem to him the best historical fulfillments of the functions of the state and economy.

Involved in this functional interpretation of the orders is the idea that the real purpose of the orders is the fulfillment of the demands of love. Although only the eyes of faith can perceive it, the essential meaning behind the orders is love. At least part of the rationale for the orders of creation is their service in compelling men to live in community. God wills that men live in a community of love, so he created men in such a way that they need one another. Hence life is only really human if it is lived in community (DI, 210-16). The existing orders, which Brunner also refers to as "the natural forms of community," do not constitute true community, but they are approximations of community to which men are driven by their social nature; hence they are indications of the intention of God. Moreover, the orders are God's means of preparing men for community, they are instruments for "divine training," they serve as a "school" which "educates" men for the life in common (DI, 330-37, 304, 350, 217).

Because love is the ultimate purpose of the orders, Brunner implies that it can become a test of the reality of the orders (DI, 216). An existing order which is absolutely contrary to love presumably would have to be judged also contrary to the order of creation. I have been suggesting that Brunner has two critical principles for judging an existing order, indicated by two of the types of conflict of duty situations--the principle of love and the functional norm of the created order. To the extent that love helps define the purpose of the order of creation, the two kinds of critical norms tend to be collapsed into one. But it is important to maintain the distinction, because the connection of the two is more covert than explicit. Whereas in The Divine Imperative Brunner makes at least a passing reference to the role of love in defining the true purpose of the orders, in Justice and the Social Order he explicitly denies that love has anything to do with the realm of the orders. In the later volume his key category is justice, the demands of which are perceived by looking at the "primal order" of God. He says that love has no place in defining the orders nor in transforming them. In the sphere of systems and institutions, i.e., in the realm of the orders *qua* orders, justice is the "supreme and ultimate standard." Love knows nothing of justice. Justice can make no use of love (JSO, 20, 128). In comparing love and justice he says,

> The sphere in which there are just claims, rights, debits and credits, and in which justice is therefore the supreme principle, and the sphere in which the gift of love is supreme, where there are no deserts, where love, without acknowledging any claim, gives all --these two spheres lie as far apart as heaven from hell.... (JSO, 113)

But in spite of all his disclaimers love and the orders or love and justice are more closely connected even in Justice and the Social Order than is immediately apparent. Even here Brunner acknowledges that love is the ultimate meaning, purpose, and goal of the orders (JSO, 117). Moreover, there is a hidden connection between love and justice which Paul Ramsey has detected.[1] Brunner defines distributive justice as the adaptation of justice to meet needs arising from differences between persons, whereas Brunner's definition of love also involves taking account of differences in persons. The point is not that Brunner is an advocate of a "love transforming justice" position, which Ramsey seems to imply, but simply that Brunner's attempt to separate love and justice is not as throughgoing as he supposes, since he cannot finally avoid letting his understanding of love influence his interpretation of justice to some degree, even when he is not aware that this has happened.

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[1] Paul Ramsey, Nine Modern Moralists (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1962), pp. 199-201.

I argued in the last chapter that love is not merely an attitude or state of mind but also a reason for acting, both as a cause of action and as a factor in moral deliberation. Thus love must also function as a norm or a principle in ethical reflection. In order to understand more fully the logic of Brunner's ethic and his rationale for the resolution of conflicts of duty, let us examine the operation of principles in his ethic, with special attention to the use of love as a principle. An analysis of the function of principles in his thought will not only indicate the method of his ethical reasoning, but it will also demonstrate the nature of the connection between the moral level and the ethical level.

Love and Principles

We have already noted that Brunner has serious reservations about the use of principles in ethical discussion. He is wary of principles because he thinks it theologically illegitimate to limit God's sovereign right to command whatever he wills, unhampered by predetermined rules. Moreover, he is fearful that reliance on principles will lead to self-justification. He opposes the whole tradition of ethics which centers its attention on rules and the resolution of the conflict of rules, deprecating it as "casuistry."

Part of Brunner's objection is that principles can be used as "deductive" norms from which can be deduced programs of action in abstraction from the realities of a given historical situation. Love cannot be a principle in this sense, he insists, because that would lead to Utopianism. The deductive use of principles does not take account of the sinful reality of historical society in which action must take place. Brunner is critical of what he feels is a common error in Christian ethics, namely, the idea that "the action of Christians could take place, as it were, in an historical vacuum, bound by no laws save those which it evolves out of its own inner consciousness" (DI, 244-45). This conception of deductive principles is somewhat similar to James M. Gustafson's "prescriptive use of principles," which he distinguishes from the "illuminative use of principles."[1] The prescriptive principle or moral absolute is too insensitive to the context of the action, and hence Brunner has no place for such principles.

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[1] James M. Gustafson, "Context Versus Principles: A Misplaced Debate in Christian Ethics," The Harvard Theological Review, LVIII (April, 1965), 190-91.

But Brunner should be able to accept the possibility of principles if we conceive of principles as illuminative rather than prescriptive, that is, if we view them merely as signposts which can guide decision when they are taken in conjunction with facts about the world. Although he insists that we must listen for the command in the moment, Brunner knows that men need guidance to prepare for the command; and when he considers the ways in which we can prepare for that command, he is forced to employ something that functions like principles, even when he avoids the term.

One source of guidance to which Brunner appeals in The Divine Imperative is love, which he mentions as providing "direction" or "instruction" for action (DI, 276).[1] He even refers to love occasionally as a "regulative principle," while denying that it can be a "constitutive principle" (DI, 463). In spite of this implicit recognition that principles can function in other ways than as deductive principles, he continually reverts to referring to principles as legal or prescriptive instead of illuminative, and he therefore continues to stress the opposition of love to principles.

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[1] The German word Weisung used in this passage is translated as "guiding principle" by Miss Wyon. Because of Brunner's aversion to the word "principle," it seems best not to use the word in translating Brunner except where he uses Prinzip, which he does, for example, in referring to love as a "regulative" principle (DI, 463).

> Unlike the rational ethic we spoke of, agape cannot be formulated in general laws. One cannot speak of it as a "principle." It is, on the contrary, something without principle, hostile to principles, just because it loves its neighbor in his uniqueness, in the individuality of his particular and given character, which cannot be grasped in general terms. The essential law of agape is just this, that it cannot be grasped in legal terms. (D, III, 310)

However, by appropriating some features of Marcus Singer's description of principles, I hope to show that Brunner's system does rely upon certain principles. Singer distinguishes first between principles and rules. Principles are more general, more pervasive, more fundamental, and hence more abstract than rules, and in Singer's interpretation they are unexceptionable because they have no content themselves but are only formal tests for judging rules and actions. Rules, on the other hand, concern particular kinds of behavior and hence are more specific. The principle of generalization, i.e., "What is right for one person must be right for any similar person in similar circumstances," is one of Singer's principles. The prohibition of killing, stealing, and lying are examples of rules.[1]

Beginning with a non-legalistic understanding of principles and viewing their limited role as that of providing the formal requirements or the general direction of action which must be given specification in light of the particular facts of the historical situation, we can characterize Brunner's ethic as consisting of several levels of principles and rules, even if Brunner does not acknowledge this structure of his ethic. The foundation of his ethic rests on the unexceptionable principle that men ought always to obey the command of God. This is certainly no deductive principle, for taken by itself this principle has absolutely no content and nothing can be derived from it. It is a purely formal principle which gives us no idea what kinds of action would be in accordance with the command of God. Below this principle is a second level principle, the principle of love. It gives some general specification to our moral duty, because it tells us that what God commands is love. I would argue that this principle, too, is unexceptionable because, according to Brunner, "God never commands anything which is contrary to love" (DI, 196). Although this principle does not seem so absolutely devoid of content as the first principle, it is still general and abstract in nature. It is clearly not a deductive principle, for that would involve, for example, applying the Sermon on the Mount directly to sinful social orders. But the principle of love, including its illustration in the Sermon on the Mount, is illuminative in pointing toward the divine command (DI, 149).

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[1] Marcus G. Singer, "Moral Rules and Principles," Essays in Moral Philosophy, ed. A. I. Melden (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1958), pp. 160-97.

Between the generality and abstraction of these two principles and the specificity of rules governing particular species of action are some intermediate norms of conduct, the orders of creation. Perhaps it is misleading to refer to the orders as "principles" or "rules," since we normally use these words to designate maxims expressed in linguistic form, whereas the orders are societal structures embodying unspoken norms. But the orders do contain a normative element which functions as a "principle" or "rule," and which could be formulated in a verbal maxim.

We have already observed the ambivalence of the relationship between love and the orders. The requirements of the orders are both contrary to love and demanded by love. The orders embody rules that are, at best, only indirectly expressive of the demands of love. Yet Brunner does seem to feel that the orders are _ultimately_ subordinate to love. But this need not mean that the orders can be deduced from love. It seems a more accurate interpretation of Brunner's thought to say that the orders are independently derived from the will of God as Creator, and that they are subordinate to love in that they are considered morally binding only as they are accepted by love as expressing the best possible way of manifesting love in the particular historical situation.[1] The _prima facie_ obligation inherent in the orders becomes actual obligation only when the action in question is also sanctioned by love, or is at least acknowledged as not ultimately contrary to love. We do not simply look at the principle of love and deduce the conception of the orders. But given the facts of human life and the nature of man as a social being whose efforts need to be coordinated and whose egoism needs to be restrained, and looking at the historical institutions which accomplish these tasks, we recognize that the principle of love does require the continued existence of that kind of order. The orders issue in binding obligations only in so far as they are ultimately required by love, or at least are not absolutely opposed by love.[1]

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[1] Burrington, _Scottish Journal of Theology_, XX, 149-53, proposes an interpretation somewhat similar to the one that I have been outlining. He thinks that Brunner sees three levels of specificity in our knowledge of the divine will. On the level of greatest generality is the one divine command, the law of love. The intermediate level consists of the orders, which provide "subordinate or derivative" rules giving specification to the one command while abstracting it from concrete reality. The divine command in the sense of the concrete command is utterly specific,

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instructing a particular person to do a particular thing in a particular situation. Presumably, Burrington says, the command in the second sense states what the command in the first sense requires in a concrete life situation.

Burrington makes a minor mistake in describing the law of love as Brunner's ultimate ethical principle. As I have indicated, the principle of love is a subsidiary principle giving some specification to the first principle that we ought to do what God wills. A more significant oversight, however, is Burrington's failure to observe and explain the conflict or apparent conflict between the one command of love and the more specific requirements of the orders. His implication that the orders are rules which are derived from the single command of love requires explanation. This would seem to imply that one who knows the command to love could thereby deduce the structure of the orders, which is certainly a questionable interpretation of Brunner. Burrington seems to assume an uncomplicated continuity between the one command and the orders which seems unwarranted as an interpretation of Brunner. In this regard, Burrington appears to have oversimplified the issues.

[1] I state the assertion in this way to leave open the possibility that there might be some social requirements of the orders which love does not demand, not even in the most indirect way, but which it does not oppose either. I

The intermediate level of the orders still exhibits a fairly high degree of generality. Below these intermediate norms are more specific rules of conduct. Some of these rules derive from the various orders. A consideration of the structure of the family, for example, leads to the formulation of the rule of monogamy and the rules prohibiting divorce and adultery (DI, 359). But there are other sources of rules as well. The prohibition of murder and stealing are introduced in connection with the Ten Commandments, but are described as requirements of love (DI, 134-35). The theological doctrine that God is the giver of life becomes the source of the rule against suicide (DI, 171). From the command of love Brunner derives the rule of truth-telling (DI, 324).

Brunner only introduces these rules as examples. He clearly does not wish to become involved in a comprehensive listing of rules, which he fears would lead to legalism. Moreover, he considers the rules only as guidelines, not as moral absolutes binding in all circumstances. Thus in the discussions of suicide, truth-telling, and divorce, he

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am not convinced that there are any such cases in Brunner's thought, since even the requirements of justice in Justice and the Social Order seem to be ultimately sanctioned by love, but I do not wish to foreclose the possibility that there might be such cases. The rule of monogamous marriage might be such a case, though I tend to think that Brunner might say that monogamy is also ultimately required by love. However, even when love does "ultimately" approve the requirements of the orders, the connection may be indirect, indeed almost remote.

explicitly acknowledges the possibility of exceptions on the basis of a contrary command of God in keeping with the requirements of love (DI, 171-72, 325, 361, 644). Brunner does not endorse any of the usual methods of handling exceptions to rules, such as redefining the rules to exclude exceptions (for example, holding that murder is always wrong, but killing sometimes justifiable), or expanding the rules to include exceptions (as in saying that lying is wrong unless there is "due cause" for telling an untruth), or proposing a scale of rules so that a more weighty rule overrides a lesser rule in cases of conflict. This whole manner of treating rules would appear casuistic to Brunner, and casuistry is the most abominable offense of traditional ethics, according to Brunner. He prefers simply to explain exceptions as being required by love or by a contravening command of God.

The interpretation of Brunner which I have been proposing does reflect at least one aspect of the logic of his ethical reasoning. Love is an illuminative principle which, taken in conjunction with facts about the world, can guide moral deliberation. Love is the overarching principle; not everything that God wills can be deduced directly from the principle of love, but nothing which is ultimately contrary to love can be good. Even if love does not always provide positive guidance, it does at least perform the negative function of forbidding certain actions.

But if my interpretation is correct, what are we to make of the passages in which Brunner says that we must do something evil or loveless "for the sake of love"? If an action is required by love because love perceives the necessity of maintaining order, how can the act be loveless? Obviously Brunner is employing love as a principle in two different ways, without ever using the word "principle." In the one case, he is using a "principle of deduction" as a source of "judgment," in the theological sense of condemning, to point up the sinfulness of the world which makes even good action in that world tainted and contrary to the pure demand of love. But as a guiding principle for determining the right act in a sinful situation, love takes account of the context and requires what is "loveless" in the deductive sense. Love as a deductive principle is valid only as an absolute standard indicating God's judgment; it is not a norm for action. Thus when Brunner says that the Christian "in the service of love" is called to "place himself within an order which is inherently loveless," he means that the order is loveless from the point of view of an absolute deductive principle of love (DI, 224). But from the point of view of love as a guiding principle the demands of the order are not finally contrary to love, for refusing to obey the summons of the order would be to neglect "the most urgent form of the service of love, that is, the maintenance of the dyke which protects human life from the irruption of chaos" (DI, 224). Failure to support the order would result in anarchy, which would be even more contrary to love.

The same kind of interpretation must be applied to Brunner's statements about doing evil for the sake of love. Brunner says that we never really understand original sin

> until we are obliged to do something which, in itself, is evil; that is, we do not see this clearly until we are obliged to do something in our official capacity--for the sake of order, and therefore for the sake of love--which, apart from our "office," would be absolutely wrong. (DI, 227)

This statement is much more careful than is customary in Brunner's writing. The key phrase is "in itself," for even though the act might be considered wrong when viewed abstractly, within the context of possible actions it is deemed the right act.

There are undeniably difficulties with my interpretation of Brunner. There are those statements in which he denies that there can be any principles, but these passages do not seem consistent with the logic of his thought. The more difficult problem involves those statements that limit the role of love to that of motivation. I have argued that the logic of Brunner's position requires that love have some role as a norm, however indirect it may be. I have even argued that conceiving of love as a motive for conduct is already to give it some status as a principle. One of Brunner's most glaring faults is his failure to follow through consistently with the logic of his position.

Brunner's inclination to relegate love entirely to the status of attitude is just as unsatisfactory theologically as it is ethically. Behind Brunner's ethic lies the theological assumption that God is by nature a God of love. We are summoned to respond to the love of God and to embody his love. In a characteristic repetition of New Testament language Brunner says that we are to love because we have first been loved by God (DI, 279). This means, of course, that our attitude and disposition should be formed by the love of God. But it would also seem to require loving actions, in imitation of the loving acts of God. God's love is not confined to the realm of attitude and disposition, but issues in a pattern of loving acts in the history of salvation, reaching its climax in the historical figure of Jesus Christ, who went about ministering to human need. If ethics is really a part of dogmatics, as Brunner asserts, then the principle of love would seem to be a theological necessity for Brunner. If we accept the "disposition" of God as a model for our disposition, we should likewise accept his loving acts as a model for our action. Love is thus a norm for both our disposition and our action.

As the loving nature of God leads to his loving acts in creating and redeeming the world, so man's new being in love should lead him to determine his action by the norm of love. This view of the continuity of disposition and norm is confirmed by the logic of moral experience. William Frankena raises the question whether it makes sense to conceive of a morality of principles without corresponding dispositions, or a morality of dispositions with no principles.

> Should we construe morality as primarily a following of certain principles or as primarily a cultivation of certain dispositions or traits? Must we choose? It is hard to see how a morality of principles can get off the ground except through the development of dispositions to act in accordance with its principles ....On the other hand, one cannot conceive of traits of character except as dispositions and tendencies to act in certain ways in certain circumstances. Hating involves being disposed to kill or harm, being just involves tending to do just acts (acts which conform to the principle of justice) when the occasion calls. Again, it is hard to see how we could know what traits to encourage or inculcate if we did not subscribe to principles, for example, to the principle of utility, or to those of benevolence and justice.
>
> I propose therefore that we regard the morality of principles and the morality of traits of character, or doing and being, not as rival kinds of morality between which we must choose, but as two complementary aspects of the same morality. Then, for every principle there will be a morally good trait, often going by the same name, consisting of a disposition to act according to it; and for every morally good trait there will be a principle defining the kind of action in which it is to express itself. To parody a famous dictum of Kant's: principles without traits are impotent, traits without principles are blind.[1]

Frankena's interpretation of the relation of moral dispositions and ethical principles faithfully represents the coherence of the moral life which we experience. His view accords with our sense of the organic unity of disposition and act, and it indicates the final inseparability of the moral and ethical levels.

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[1] William K. Frankena, Ethics (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963), pp. 52-53.

Brunner tends to stress the disposition of love at the expense of the norm or principle of love partly because he wants to avoid at all costs the idea of a deductive principle of love. But part of the reason for his lopsided emphasis on disposition derives from his narrow definition of love. Love is a general term covering a variety of types or levels of relationships. Unfortunately, Brunner is less than thorough in examining the differences between levels of love or in showing the relation between the several levels. In the discussion of Brunner's view of love in Chapter I above we can discern at least six distinguishable characteristics of love. (1) Love means surrender to God. (2) Love means feeling for the other man, being warm toward him and sympathetic with him. (3) Love means accepting the other man for what he is. (4) Love means desiring fellowship and community with other men. (5) Love means willing the good of the other man. (6) Love means a willingness to sacrifice one's own welfare for the sake of the welfare of the other.

If one of these aspects is stressed out of proportion and without indicating its connection with the other aspects of love, then the continuity of love is lost and distortion occurs. This is indeed what happens in Brunner's case. The aspect of fellowship, the will to community, becomes Brunner's dominant mode of understanding love, and the equally important aspect of willing the good of the neighbor is pushed to one side and minimized. Thus the most loving thing that a person can do, according to Brunner, is not the performance of some act for the good of the neighbor, but showing love toward him. Disposition is stressed at the expense of act. In The Divine Imperative Brunner seemed to have a greater awareness of the variety of love than he did later in his career. Even in that volume his treatment of love was neither systematic nor balanced, since that volume was dominated by his personalism; but at least he was somewhat more sensitive to the variety of love in the early work than he was in his other major ethical treatise, Justice and the Social Order, where love is understood almost entirely in terms of personal community.

Throughout his career, Brunner idealized the personal community of an "I" and a "Thou" as the only real form of love; all other expressions of love are regarded as inferior approximations to true love. Whenever he inquires into the application of love to the social context beyond the sphere of the personal one-to-one relationship, he always stresses the discontinuity and indirectness of the function of love. Of course, Brunner is right in suggesting that the kinds of dealings that we can have with another individual human being and the ways we can act toward him in a personal relation are different from the way in which we can deal with many men in an institutional structure. However, this need not mean that we deprecate the latter as being less loving than the former; rather, we may see it as a case of different levels and different expressions of love, each of which stands in genuine continuity with other aspects of love. If the aspect of willing the good of the neighbor is stressed as being an equally important and legitimate element of love, and if the neighbor with whom we are concerned is not so strictly limited to the individual neighbor whom we happen to meet in an I-Thou encounter, then love can have a role in the social sphere, working itself out in principles and rules designed to promote the well being of all neighbors.

In the last volume of his systematic theology, Brunner once more acknowledges the variety of love and comes close to recognizing the significance of the continuity of the levels of love. He still maintains that agape cannot be formulated in "general laws" or contained in a "principle," for it is concerned with the neighbor in his uniqueness. But agape has a "rational analogy" in the Categorical Imperative, which in its third formulation involves treating men as ends only and never as means; that is, it involves the acknowledgement of the personal dignity of every man (D, III, 309-10). Agape remains the sole guide for the Christian. He must give expression to love even within the institutions of the world. But since the commandment of love cannot be the norm for fashioning institutions, agape must work through its rational analogy (D, III, 313). Brunner seems to be attempting to explain how he could have maintained earlier that love both is and is not a principle. Agape is unprincipled; its rational analogy is by nature a principle.

However, this resolution of the problem is still far from satisfactory. The choice of language indicates that Brunner still conceives of "Christian love" almost totally in personalistic terms. He does not refer to the principle of human dignity as the social "expression" of love nor as the rational "form" of love; instead, he says that it is the rational "analogy" of love, which means that it is not *really* love, but only something similar to love. Brunner is still preoccupied with the discontinuity of *pure* agape and its less pure rational "analogy." That this interpretation of Brunner is correct is attested by his reply to Reinhold Niebuhr's contribution to *The Theology of Emil Brunner*, where Brunner comments on what he had said in the third volume of the dogmatics.

> There I have said in detail that the law of love creates no standard and that no social-ethical system can be derived from it. Such a thing is possible only when agape is replaced by the rational principle of respecting the equal human dignity in every man. This rational principle of Stoic and Kantian ethics is indeed suitable to become the basis of a social ethic, and this is what most American theologians mean when they speak of the commandment of love. (TEB, 351)

What the American theologians have understood, and what Brunner has not acknowledged, is that the recognition of the dignity of every man is the expression which love itself assumes on the level of social life, just as the desire for fellowship with an individual is its expression on the personal level. The "rational principle" of which Brunner speaks is not something different from love, but it is the way love operates in the social sphere.

The view of love that should be the foundation for a Christian ethic would involve a respect for the various levels and expressions of love. On the moral level, the Christian life should embody love as a general disposition which gives coherence and significance to all our good acts and feelings. This disposition would continually give rise to personal loving relations and issue in immediate concrete acts of benevolence on behalf of the neighbor that one finds close at hand and in more reflective and calculating acts of benevolence on behalf of men in society, acts guided by the illuminative principle of love. That Brunner fails to develop such a balanced approach to the ethic of love is largely the result of his predisposition to conceive of love as the personal encounter of an "I" and a "Thou," an encounter which he contrasts with all contacts that are "official."

The Personal and the Official

I indicated earlier that an adequate definition of Brunner's personalism presupposed his understanding of the office. Let us now return to examine his idea of the personal sphere in light of what we have observed about the official realm. The sphere of the official is that area of life in which one's duties are regulated by his role in social life. The office as such compels men to deal with other people in keeping with the impersonal "legal" requirements of official life, instead of treating them as brothers for whom Christ died. Whether one is dealing with individual men or with multitudes of men, so long as one is acting within the requirements of the office he must deal with them impersonally.

The personal sphere, by contrast, is the realm of life where men encounter one another in genuine fellowship, apart from the restrictions and disguise of the office. Brunner once says that love is not concerned with work on the "grand scale," but in truth his view is that love in its deepest sense is not seriously concerned with work of any kind, but only with communion among men who "show love" to one another. Real communion is never possible for a collective body, Brunner thinks, but it can only exist between the "I" and a single "Thou" (DI, 328).

Brunner's description of official life is as much an exaggeration in one direction as his idealization of personal encounter is in the other. We simply do not feel that our lives are as rigidly structured by our roles as Brunner implies. His polarization of the personal and the official automatically depersonalizes and "de-agapefies" the sphere of the official, rendering it "harsh" and "rough" or at best "impersonal" in a way that we do not often feel acutely. His criticism of the depersonalization of the official is really a self-justifying, circular argument based on his own definition of the official sphere as the sphere of the impersonal. Likewise his notion of personal encounter distorts the understanding of human relationships by abstracting these relationships from their historical context. As we shall see, Brunner is aware that life is not so easily divided into official and personal areas as his scheme suggests, but he fails to see that much of his evaluation of the two elements presupposes a sharp division. The fact that Brunner makes the dichotomy leads him to underrate the official order, the realm in which most external action occurs, characterizing it as the husk within which the really important matter, the personal encounter, takes place (DI, 228-33).

Brunner acknowledges that we can only meet our neighbor within the official order, since we are all members of the historical community. A purely personal relationship is an abstraction, for no one lives even for a moment apart from his office. But neither is a purely official relation possible, for this, too, is an abstraction. Wherever men meet one another, there is always a non-official element in the contact in addition to the official (DI, 227-28, 328-29).

Since the office constitutes only one aspect of life, it is both possible and necessary that the Christian seek a loving encounter with the other person within the structures of the official order. Brunner speaks of this encounter as "breaking through" the harshness and impersonality of the official order to meet the other man as a brother (DI, 228, 433-34). The Christian must strive to make his "heartfelt" brotherly love "penetrate through all the nooks and crannies in the official order to reach the

'Thou' of the other person 'personally'" (DI, 218). The search for personal relationships within the sphere of the official order is perhaps what Brunner means when he says that the existing order is a "vessel which we are to fill with the content of love" (DI, 218). The Christian's most important duty, Brunner says, is that of "pouring the vitality of love into the necessarily rigid forms of the order." The orders are the shell within which life is encased; hence they are only a means, the end being the personal relation itself (DI, 233).

Brunner cites several examples to show how love can work within the official realm despite its impersonality. The judge is compelled by his office to condemn an accused man in accordance with the law. But the Christian judge is able and obliged to make the condemned man know that he has not personally broken off all relations with him. Likewise, a father is limited in the amount of personal help he is able to offer a man in distress, because his role as father and husband involves responsibilities to his own family, but he must do what he can for the man (DI, 228). The Christian businessman cannot be expected to conduct his business on the basis of the Sermon on the Mount. But he can and must seek to "break through" the autonomy of his official work to treat his customers as neighbors whom he loves and to conduct his business as a service to the community. He can go even farther and treat his workers as brothers for whom he has a large degree of responsibility, and he can sometimes even violate the "law" of business by not buying in the cheapest and selling in the dearest market (DI, 259).

Brunner continued the same line of thought in Justice and the Social Order. Since no man is only a member of an institution, but always a person as well, there is room for love, he says, "even in the most impersonal of institutions, not in the actual activity of the institution itself, but 'between the lines'" (JSO, 129). The more limited the scope of the institution, and therefore the narrower the circle of relationships involved, the more room there is for love to act. Thus Brunner suggests the following formula:

> The more closely an institution approaches the personal sphere, the smaller the number of human beings it embraces, and the less things predominate over persons, the greater is the scope it gives to love. (JSO, 129)

Brunner says that the state, because it is the most comprehensive of the social institutions, knows nothing of love. But marriage is so near the personal and hence so accessible to love that a marriage "is perfect in proportion as its ruling principle is love" (JSO, 129).

Although Brunner recognizes that the distinction between the official and the personal spheres cannot be absolute, he considers it a necessary "point of view" (DI, 277-78). Therefore, he accepts as legitimate the division of morality into a social and a personal ethic, or a public and private ethic. The social ethic is concerned with social structures, and the personal ethic deals with the efforts of Christians to "break through" the official order to meet others in love "between the lines" of the orders. There can be no question about which of these spheres Brunner deems more important. The Christian's "real work," he says, is in the "personal sphere, in the personal relation between one human being and another" (DI, 278). The personal element is supreme over all claims of the order. Nothing is higher than the personal, for the really decisive events are always in the personal realm (DI, 203, 228, 233, 299).

I would not deny that there is some truth in Brunner's distinction between the public and the private realm, for obviously we do live and act in more and in less structured settings, and the demands placed upon us do differ with the nature of the setting. But I think that on both psychological and ethical grounds we must reject the notion that we can desire to have communion with a man, simply on the basis of his humanity, without being equally concerned for his well-being. Moreover, since we should be ready to seek fellowship with all men simply because God loves them, it would seem that love would compel us to be concerned for the welfare of all those who are potential subjects for fellowship. Assuming that God is concerned for the welfare of his human creatures in addition to desiring communion with them, and assuming that his love encompasses all men, it would seem theologically unjustifiable for Brunner to conceive of Christian love as individualistically and as personalistically as he does.

Moreover, Brunner seems to have overschematized the moral life and overdramatized the dichotomy between the official and the personal when he places such great emphasis on the marked contrast between the "secondary" and the "primary" aspects of morality, between the "rind" and the "soft contents" of life, between the "husk" and the "kernel," and between the "vessel" and the "contents." Brunner has the temperament of a dialectical thinker whose distinctions are not so much analytical tools for purposes of examination as they are real divisions in life itself. The poles of his contrasts become genuinely conflicting antitheses instead of merely different points of view. Although he sometimes asserts that the dialectical poles are "ultimately" related, he never shows how this is so or what ethical difference it would make. Many of his antitheses can be traced back to the central dichotomy in his doctrine of God. Hence it will be useful in concluding this chapter to examine in more detail Brunner's doctrine of God and its relation to his ethic.

The Doctrine of God and Ethical Theory

We have already observed how Brunner's ethical theory intersects at a number of points with his theological system. The focus of this connection is his doctrine of God. I have already given some indication that his doctrine of God provides the structural underpinning of his whole ethical system. Such an interpretation has some problems, since it requires an extension of his thought that Brunner might reject, but I feel that the extension is a proper deduction from his own words.

As I indicated earlier in this chapter, Brunner capitalizes on the distinction between God's work as Creator and his work as Redeemer. It is from his work as Creator and Preserver that we have the "orders" by which the social life of man is governed and on which depends the individual's official station with its particular set of duties. Thus it is as Creator that God commands us to adjust ourselves to the existing order and to accept the duties imposed by our offices. In contrast to the orders and their requirements is the command of God to believe and obey and love. Brunner contrasts this command with the "loveless" demands of the orders. I have interpreted the command to love as the will of the Redeemer, though Brunner is not as explicit in making this connection as he is in connecting the orders with the work of the Creator. But the work of the Redeemer does oppose the orders, imposing upon man the duty to ignore the existing orders to do "something new." There are passages in which Brunner seems to connect the sphere of the personal and the inner disposition of love directly to the will and command of the Redeemer, as when he suggests that the command of the Redeemer in the midst of a sinful world calls for personal works of love (DI, 259). One passage in particular both summarizes Brunner's distinction between the Creator and Redeemer and indicates the connection of love with the work of the Redeemer.

> The command of the Creator and the command of the Redeemer each requires a particular mode of expression, in spite of the fact that the one can only be known at the same time as the other. This does not mean that there are two commandments which we have to obey, as if we had to obey alternatively the will of the Creator and the will of the Redeemer. It is, however, true, that according to the point of view of each there is a distinction. As the creator assigns us our existence and our sphere of life, so also God, as our Creator, summons us to submit to the concrete actuality of this existence in a particular sphere and way of life. He tells us in what sphere we have to act. In so doing, He gives our activity a basis of solid reality. The will of the Redeemer, on the other hand, gives motive and direction to our conduct....We are to act "on the spot," in accordance with the "situation"; we are committed to "realism." But the reason for this behavior must be harmony with the Divine will of redemption, that is, love. (DI, 128-29)

It may be objected to this interpretation that love is not only the character of the Redeemer, but also of the Creator. The passage just quoted continues with the assertion that through the redemption in Christ we can see that love is the "basis of the Creation" (DI, 129). It is certainly true that the ultimate union of Creator and Redeemer is exactly at this point--that God is the God of love. But in so far as God is perceived as Creator and Redeemer, the Redeemer must be associated with love, for it is only through experiencing the love of the Redeemer that we perceive that God is love; and the work of the Creator is antithetical to the pure demands of love to the degree that the orders are opposed to love. Moreover, since Brunner asserts that we can only understand God's work in a "twofold conception," he must think that ethical knowledge depends upon the distinction between Creator and Redeemer as the source of the orders and the command of love, respectively (DI, 122-23).

We need only extend the logic one step farther to apply the distinction of Creator and Redeemer to the dichotomy between love and justice in Justice and the Social Order. Although Brunner does not discuss the doctrine of God in that volume, it seems to be assumed. Brunner clearly connects justice and the primal order of God with God's will as Creator (JSO, 98-99). Love seems to be implicitly and logically associated with the Redeemer. As Brunner describes the love-justice dichotomy, the dual citizenship of the Christian places him under two different kinds of authority. As a member of an earthly state, where he is subject to the earthly law of even-handed justice, the Christian must live in accordance with the order of creation established by the Creator. As a citizen of the heavenly kingdom, which is governed by the heavenly law of forgiving love, the Christian is subject to the command of love as this is revealed by the Redeemer (JSO, 125). Even though Brunner acknowledges that there is an "ultimate, secret affinity" between the earthly justice which renders to each man his due and the heavenly justice which returns good for evil, this hidden connection makes no apparent ethical difference in Brunner's system (JSO, 15). The contrast between the official and the personal, which are functions of the earthly and heavenly justice respectively, is sharper than ever.

The similar disjunction between the internal motive and the external action which is a continuing theme in all of Brunner's writings seems ultimately to be rooted in the doctrine of God. The external aspect can be largely traced through the orders to the Creator of the orders; the internal disposition or motive is directly related to the Redeemer.

If Brunner's doctrine of God leads to a whole series of dichotomies in his ethic which do not seem to reflect our actual moral experience, then we can only wonder whether there is not something wrong with the doctrine of God. It would seem that the doctrine of God is theologically and ethically unsatisfactory, since Brunner's God seems to be working at cross-purposes with himself. What God really desires as Redeemer is love, yet his work as Creator and Preserver is antithetical to it. In The Divine Imperative God the Redeemer's will for the world is impeded by the coarse, rough orders. Love cannot be applied directly to social life because God must use the loveless orders to prevent anarchy. But in that volume Brunner has an explanation for the conflict between the work of the Creator and Redeemer--man's sin. The problem is not so much God's orders as the sinful nature of the corrupted orders. It is what man has done to the orders that makes them loveless and rough. Brunner seems to overemphasize the impending anarchy that man's sinfulness supposedly threatens, so that this explanation is only partly satisfactory. But if it did explain the necessity for loveless orders, then Brunner might better describe God's work in governing the sinful world in terms of a contrast between the original intention of the Creator-Redeemer on the one hand and the necessarily harsh work of the Preserver on the other, thereby making it clear that it is sin and not creation that stands in the way of love. Such an approach would enable Brunner to contend more cogently than he does that the original and true intention of creation was love and that the orders were created for the sake of community.

The dichotomy in the conception of God becomes more acute, however, in Justice and the Social Order. In that book it is clearly not the sinfulness of the orders that makes them so opposed to love; rather, their institutional nature makes them impersonal and hence contrary to love. But the institutional nature of the orders is inherent in their created nature as such. The sharpness of the distinction between the personal and the official clearly derives from the conflict between the will of the Redeemer that men live in personal community and the work of the Creator in establishing structured orders which can function only on the basis of impersonal justice.

If I have represented Brunner faithfully, then it would seem that the will of the Redeemer is ultimately more important than the will of the Creator, though the will of the Creator dominates our social action. But how is it possible from a theological point of view to rank the will of God on a scale of lesser and greater importance? Are there degrees of God's will? To return to the command language, does God command one thing with more seriousness than another? If obedience is the measure of faith and if the command of God is always utterly specific, can we grant that one act of obedience is higher than another on the scale of religious value? Of course, Brunner tells us that the command and will of God is really only one, but that we can only conceive of it in a twofold conception. It would seem that our theology can only deceive us about the nature of God. But if Brunner can know that the will of God is really one, why cannot this knowledge play a more important role in our theology and ethics?

To turn to another problem, we might ask whether the exaltation of the sphere of the personal and the internal and the occasional depreciation of the value of the material world in favor of the "kingdom not of this world" does not indicate a tendency in Brunner's thought toward a Platonic or Gnostic depreciation of the material world which is decidedly contrary to the traditional Christian doctrine of creation. As a further development of this question, we might ask whether there is not a tendency in Brunner's thought that would imply that the goal of Redemption is logically the abolition of Creation rather than its fulfillment.

Perhaps these criticisms of Brunner's doctrine of God are overstated; but I submit that they do indicate the direction of Brunner's theology and ethic. In all theology the question of emphasis is extremely important, but it is especially so in Brunner's case. My contention is that Brunner's dialectical emphasis is in serious need of redress if the antinomies between the orders and love, the official and the personal, and the Creator and the Redeemer are ever to be reconciled. The two-faceted doctrine of God is probably a bad place to begin a theology about the God of Jesus Christ. But the bifurcation of the activity of God already inherent in the "two-handed" notion of God is intensified when it occurs in conjunction with the philosophical "I-Thou" personalism that pervades Brunner's whole theology. The systematic application of this personalism to the doctrine of God accentuates the division between the sphere of the orders and the realm of the personal; and by placing primary emphasis on the personal as the real locus of love and the sphere where the real duty of the Christian lies, Brunner pushes his ethic in the direction of that "certain kind of Lutheranism" which he denounces for its "disastrous dogma that the various 'orders' are not subject to the command of Jesus Christ [to love], but only to the rule of reason" (DI, 217).

The major problems that I have raised about Brunner's ethical system are related to similar problems in his theological system. His ethic is thus unquestionably in constant interaction with his theology, so that religion and morality are definitely connected in Brunner's thought. Whether this connection of the theological and the ethical can be rationally justified is a question which we must consider in the final chapter. But there is yet another crucial question of theology which will shed even more light on Brunner's understanding of the relation of religion and morality. We can pose the question in more concrete terms by asking what kind of moral knowledge the unbeliever possesses and how his moral life compares with that of the Christian. Or we can express the question more generally as the problem of revelation and reason. It is to this problem that we must turn our attention in the next chapter.

APPENDIX ON BRUNNER'S DOCTRINE OF GOD

Although he was affiliated denominationally with the Swiss Reformed Church, Brunner is theologically more closely akin to Luther than to Calvin. It was Luther who suggested to him the major outlines of his doctrine of God and the related idea of the orders of creation. Brunner insists that God is a unity, but he works in two distinct ways. Brunner treats the duality of God's activity on several levels without ever explicitly attempting to relate them to one another.

On the ethical and cosmological level, there tends to be a dichotomy between God's activity as Creator and his work as Redeemer. As Creator and Preserver, God made man and the world and governs his creation through the orders of creation, holding back the socially disrupting consequences of sin and forcing mankind into some semblance of community. As Redeemer he restores the original intention of creation and labors to perfect the creation in light of the coming Kingdom of God. The Creator is the "beginning and the ground of all existence, the source of all life." The Redeemer is the "End, the Goal, toward which all existence tends" (DI, 122).

Brunner feels that this scheme, like the first chapter of Romans, permits a doctrine of General Revelation or Revelation in Creation which makes men responsible before God without offering any basis for salvation apart from Jesus Christ. Moreover, by allowing for the persistence in man of the "formal image" of God, Brunner can maintain a relatively high view of the rational faculties of fallen man. Sinful man can perceive a great deal about the order of creation, and God uses this natural perception to maintain civil order in a world where he is not known or worshipped. This interpretation accounts for the order that can be observed even in fallen creation (DI, 220-21). Without these divinely established orders, human life would be impossible. But knowledge of the ordered nature of life does not enable fallen man to know the creating and redeeming God who stands behind the "constants" that sustain the world. After The Divine Imperative Brunner does not develop the Creator-Redeemer dichotomy any further; but he does occasionally refer to it, and it is perhaps assumed in other works when reference is made to the orders of creation (MR, 78-81; D, II, 154-55; JSO, 46-53, 85-95, 110-18).

In addition to the Creator-Redeemer dichotomy, there is on the soteriological level the traditional dichotomy of law and gospel. At times Brunner seems to make the two distinctions equivalent, as when he speaks of the civil or political use of the law, assuming that the law can be taken as expressing the content of the orders of creation and the gospel as referring to the redeeming work of God (D, II, 317-21). But normally Brunner uses the categories of law and gospel to refer only to the personal, soteriological work of God. In this sense the focus is on the pedagogical use of the law, and there is no immediately evident correlation with the Creator-Redeemer dichotomy (RR, 332-37). The law makes man aware of his sin and his utter helplessness to extricate himself from his predicament. The "strange" work of God through the law shatters man, so that he is led to accept the grace of God in Christ (D, II, 121). Brunner observes that sometimes the Gospel also can convict a man and bring him to the necessary contrition, but then it is functioning not as gospel, but as law (MR, 522).

A third level of the dichotomy involves the distinction between the "loving" God and the "wrathful" God. The one holy and loving God is revealed in a twofold "sphere." In the one, God reveals himself in Jesus Christ as salvation, light, and life; in the other, where he is not present in Christ, he reveals himself as consuming wrath, destroying and annihilating whatever opposes him (D, I, 230).

> These two spheres are reality; the one is the reality in Christ in which we are set by the saving Word and saving faith; the other is the reality outside of Christ, the world of doom and darkness, out of which we are rescued by Christ, in so far as we believe in Him. (D, I, 230)

God's wrath is a function of his holiness. "God takes the fact that He is God seriously" (D, I, 161). This strange work of God is the resistance of God which disobedient men experience. It is the negative form of the original love of God (D, II, 118). The wrath of God, his presence apart from Christ, will persist even in hell.[1]

Brunner never relates these three parallel dichotomies systematically. He seems sometimes to assume that they are equivalent, as when he speaks of the Creator and the God of Wrath in parallel in the same paragraph (D, I, 232). But the three dichotomies function on different levels and have such different content that it seems impossible to synthesize them into a single coherent doctrine of God. The distinction between the God of Wrath and the God of love is based on the presence or absence of Christ. If this were equivalent to the Creator-Redeemer dichotomy, with wrath corresponding to the work of the Creator and love to the work of the Redeemer, then Christ would have no function in the creation. Indeed, Brunner once says that "God [the Father] alone is Creator" (D, I, 232). But he also asserts that Christ is the "mediator" of both "creation" and "election" (D, I, 232, 308). Hence the creating activity of God cannot correspond exactly to the work of the God of Wrath. Moreover, it seems most difficult to identify the wrathful work of God, the destroying, annihilating "mask" of God, with his creative work, for creation is a positive good, ultimately an expression of the love of God (D, II, 13). Finally, it seems that God acts wrathfully only where his mercy is rejected, whereas he is Creator prior to any human response, and he remains the Creator-Preserver regardless of the response of man.

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[1] In the first volume of his systematic theology, Brunner was quite certain of the existence of an eternal hell, and he denounced in no uncertain terms the doctrine of apokatastasis (D, I, 352-53). During the period between the first and third volumes of the dogmatics, however, a period of over a decade, Brunner became less certain of this position. Thus in the third volume he attempts to assert the truth of a doctrine of damnation and of a doctrine of universalism, which seems to be his way of saying that the matter is an open question which must be left to the final judgment of God (D, III, 423).

A further problem concerns the difficulty of relating the two poles of each dichotomy to each other. How is the creative activity of God related to his work as Redeemer? How is the God of Wrath related to the God of Love? Brunner repeatedly asserts that the dichotomies do ultimately find their unity in God. "God the Creator is the same as God the Redeemer" (DI, 220). Brunner speaks of the "unity of God the Creator and God the Redeemer" (CC, II, 41). The Creator and Redeemer are distinct, but they are not to be severed (MR, 79). Likewise Brunner asserts that holiness and love are insolubly united in God, and he speaks of the "antithesis" _and_ "identity" of the holiness and love of God (D, I, 183; RR, 46). Yet Brunner never grapples with the problem of how the antithetical activities are united in God. In the first volume of his dogmatics, he seems to indicate that the antithesis is inherent in the Trinity itself; but here Brunner walks with halting steps, for he is wary of "speculative" doctrines of God that know too much about the nature of God as he is "in himself."

Some of Brunner's statements seem to suggest that the dichotomy is merely a creation of the human mind. The limitations of human understanding seem to impose a duality upon what is really unified.

> The work of the Creator differs from that of the Redeemer. The will of God is indeed only one, but we can only understand it [emphasis added] in this twofold character. (DI, 122)

He adds that our limited human perspective requires that we conceive of God and his action in a "twofold conception," even though in God himself the action is only one (DI, 123).

Other passages, however, seem to indicate that the duality is an essential difference in the action of God itself, as it is perpetrated in the face of varying circumstances.

> God the Creator is the same as God the Redeemer. But His work as Creator and Preserver of the world differs from His work as Redeemer. As Redeemer He can only work where His Word is heard, that is, in faith. As Creator and Preserver He works even where men do not know Him at all. (DI, 220)

The differences in historical circumstances seem to require two discrete kinds of commands. As Brunner puts it, there is "one Lord, one motive, but two kinds of command" (DI, 620).

There is a third possibility, namely, that the duality is neither a product of the human way of observing things nor a product of the way in which different historical circumstances compel God to act differently, but that the dichotomy is actually rooted in a functional differentiation within the Trinity itself. In The Divine Imperative Brunner never treats the duality of God's action in terms of the differing tasks of different Persons of the Trinity, and in another book of the same period he explicitly refers to Christ as both "Lawgiver" and "Creator" (M, 558). However, when he wrote the first volume of his systematic theology a number of years later, Brunner had moved closer to a functional distinction which inheres in the structure of the Trinity. The Father and the Son are not to be placed alongside of each other, but one after the other in an order indicating the movement of the divine self-communication (D, I, 225). The presence or absence of Christ in the work of God distinguishes the God of Love from the God of Wrath. In order to preserve the freedom of God, i.e., the freedom for his holiness to work itself out as wrath where his mercy is not received, Brunner insists upon a "subordination" of the Son to the Father, though it is a subordination that does not eliminate the 'omoousios (D, I, 229-32).

> This freedom of God, to effect salvation and doom, light and darkness, life and death, is the unfathomable mystery of God, which even in the revelation of the Son remains a mystery. (D, I, 232)

But even though the duality of this action is a mystery, it seems to be a mystery having something to do with the different functions of the members of the Trinity.

There is one other statement in the first volume of Brunner's dogmatics that is of considerable interest. He says that the Father and the Son are not identical, and then he adds, "We find that this leads to conclusions which are of the greatest practical significance, even for our attitude towards social and ethical questions" (D, I, 229). This statement would lead us to believe that now at least Brunner sees the Creator-Redeemer dichotomy and the resulting ethical structure of The Divine Imperative as logically associated with the distinction between the functions of the Father and the Son, respectively. I have already indicated some of the difficulties with such an understanding; but Brunner perhaps does not see these problems because he does not work out systematically the implications of this rather casual suggestion. Brunner would likely be opposed to a careful examination of those implications, since he feels that the emphasis of the doctrine of the Trinity should be placed on the "economic" Trinity, as God's existence as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is observed in his work (D, I, 224). Brunner denies that we can make the "mutual relation of the Three Persons within the Trinity a subject of theological discussion" (D, I, 225). But it would seem that Brunner himself has opened the door for just such theological speculation, and he should either develop his idea of a functional differentiation in the Trinity more fully, or eliminate it entirely from his theology.

CHAPTER III

REVELATION AND REASON IN ETHICS

We observed in the first chapter that faith is the prime ingredient in the moral life of the Christian and we noted in the second chapter how theological knowledge figures in the ethical reflection which guides the moral life of the Christian. Let us now consider the question of the place of reason in the moral life and in ethical reflection. An analysis of this facet of Brunner's thought will enable us to see more clearly the similarities and divergencies of Christian and non-Christian morality and ethics and will reveal more clearly the components of the Christian's moral life and ethical thought. The general question of this chapter, which we must ask of both Christian and non-Christian morality, is this: To what extent does ethical and moral knowledge depend upon the exercise of man's natural rational powers, and to what extent does it require a special religious source, namely, revelation?

Expressed in Frankena's categories, the question is that of epistemological dependence of morality upon religion. Frankena's suggestion is that even if God is not the ground of morality, it might still be that men would need revelation in order to know the good.[1] For Brunner this problem is one aspect of the larger question of revelation and reason. None of the studies of the general problem of revelation and reason in Brunner's thought has dealt extensively with the place of reason in his ethics.

Rational and Revealed Morality

Brunner's general doctrine of revelation and reason emphasizes both the competency and the limitations of natural human reason. Distinguishing between two kinds of reason, or perhaps we might better say two functions of reason, may help to clarify the issues with which we must be concerned. We can call the first "reasoning" or "instrumental reason," or, as Brunner puts it in referring to this function, "formal reason" (RR, 383). These terms designate the operation of the reason in comprehending the meaning of linguistic symbols and in organizing, relating, and expressing bits of human knowledge. The second function of reason involves the rational perception of truth; that is, it involves reason as a source of knowledge of reality.

To illustrate the distinction we can take the case of theology. The science of theology must employ reason in the sense of reasoning, even if it disavows all possibility of rational knowledge of God apart from revelation. Brunner certainly acknowledges this function of reason.

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[1] Frankena, Harvard Educational Review, XXXI, 424-25.

> In the very act of expressing this sentence, writing it down, and printing it, we have already put in use the whole apparatus of the human reason and of human culture. Whoever forms sentences, even if they are sentences full of heavenly wisdom, does so, not only and not primarily, but still in the strength which comes from the fact that he possesses reason; for apart from reason there is only "speaking in tongues"--and perhaps not even this. (RR, 16)

Thus even theology, which according to Brunner is reflection on the extrarational source of knowledge in revelation, requires the use of reason in the first sense. Even the grammatical understanding of the Bible requires rational activity (RR, 379; DI, 124). The difference between the theologian and the "simple old woman who believes in Christ" lies exactly at this point, for the theologian is not different because of greater faith, but because of the greater power of thought in service of faith (RR, 16). The study of theology means placing reason at the service of the word of God (RR, 311).

Reason is necessary not only for theology but even for faith itself, since faith is accomplished only in a "process of thought, in an act of noesis" (RR, 216). Man could not believe without reason. Although one does not need a great mind to believe, if he had no mind he could not believe (MR, 341; DI, 486).

> Sin and faith, a wrong and a right relation with God, both presuppose formal reason, that is, the power to think at all. (RR, 383)

But the source of the knowledge of faith is clearly not reason. Although faith presupposes reason, it does not "spring from thought" (RR, 216).

Perhaps the function of reason in the act of faith does not seem identical with the logical system-building function that it serves in theology; and it might be proposed that the analysis could be sharpened by defining "instrumental reason" as only one aspect of what Brunner calls "formal reason." However, my only concern is to show that reason can function in the service of faith and theology without being a source of the knowledge of God, and in this sense the function of reason is similar in both cases.

In addition to its instrumental or formal function, reason is also an organ for the perception of truth. Brunner thinks that ultimately all truth is grounded in God, including truth about the world as well as the truth about God and ethical truth. Since God is the source of all knowledge, we can only perceive and discover truth by virtue of the light that comes from God (RR, 318; PR, 60; MR, 245). But on the basis of the rational powers given to men by the Creator, men can attain knowledge of the world without thereby knowing that God is its source. Within this sphere, reason is a competent judge of truth (RR, 381). But the reason lacks the capacity to know God. Knowledge of God depends on the revelation of God. Thus there are two ways of knowing or two kinds of knowledge, the knowledge of revelation and the knowledge of reason (RR, 16).

Of course, the reason's knowledge of this world is never complete, for it is always growing and purifying itself (D, II, 30-31). Moreover, reason cannot achieve ultimate knowledge of the world, because such knowledge has a "secret connection" with the Creator which the reason cannot perceive. Even the hydrogen atom has a "metaphysical background" which reason cannot know, for in order to know what lies behind the world and "holds the world together in its inmost being," one must know the Creator, and this is impossible for reason (RR, 382). The fact that reason does not perceive the ultimate source of truth does not mean, however, that reason has no claim to possess genuine knowledge. Its knowledge is real, in so far as it claims no more than being knowledge of the world (D, II, 30-31).

But even within the legitimate range of rational knowledge of the world, the reason is in fact limited, because sin prevents it from perceiving all the truth of which it is theoretically capable. Brunner speaks of the effects of sin upon man's reason as disturbing, blinding, obscuring, confusing and distorting, and clouding and infecting the reason. The disturbance is most prominent in the knowledge of God. The unaided sinful human reason can have a vague awareness of God, but what fragmentary knowledge the sinful reason can attain has the character of law and hence is only condemning.

The distinction between the knowledge of God and knowledge of the world would seem to suggest a clear line of demarcation between the realm of knowledge affected by sin and the area in which the reason is still competent to operate unaffected. But Brunner's view is rather that the two sources of knowledge often interact in particular instances of knowledge, so that the degree of distortion that occurs because of sin can best be described by a proportional statement.

> The nearer anything lies to that center of existence where we are concerned with the whole, that is, with man's relation to God and the being of the person, the greater is the disturbance of rational knowledge by sin; the farther away anything lies from this center, the less is the disturbance, and the less difference is there between knowing as a believer or as an unbeliever. This disturbance reaches its maximum in theology and its minimum in the exact sciences, and zero in the sphere of the formal [mathematics and logic]....In other words, the more we are concerned with the world, as the world, the more autonomous is the reason; but the more we are concerned with the world as God's Creation, the less autonomy is left to the reason. (RR, 383-84)

Brunner elaborates further upon the idea of proportional distortion in a later volume.

> Sin does not hinder men from knowing the things of the world, the laws of nature, the facts of nature, and man in his natural, historical and cultural manifestations. But the more we are dealing with the inner nature of man, with his attitude to God, and the way in which he is determined by God, it is evident that this sinful illusion becomes increasingly dominant. The more closely a subject is related to man's inward life, the more natural human knowledge is "infected" by sin; while the further away it is, the less will be its effect. Hence we find the maximum of sinful blindness in the knowledge of God itself. Hence mathematics and the natural sciences are much less affected by this negative element than the humanities, and the latter less than ethics and theology. In the sphere of natural science, for instance--as opposed to natural philosophy--it makes practically no difference whether a scholar is a Christian or not; but this difference emerges the moment that we are dealing with problems of sociology, or law, which affect man's personal and social life. (D, II, 27)

Clearly Brunner wants to give reason an important place in human life. He is not opposed to reason per se; indeed, reason aware of its limitations is good and necessary. What Brunner does oppose is arrogant, autonomous reason that attempts to move beyond its realm of competence and posits itself as absolute and self-sufficient (MR, 244; RR, 17; PR, 195; DI, 484).

Having sketched Brunner's approach to the general problem of revelation and reason, I must now turn to his treatment of the subject specifically with reference to ethics. The first problem concerns the extent of ethical knowledge that is available to the non-Christian by means of his unredeemed reason. Because the discussion in the preceding chapters may give the impression that morality is completely bound up with religion, the answer to the new question may seem immediately apparent--the non-Christian has no ethical knowledge.

But Brunner does acknowledge the existence of what he calls "natural morality," and he even recognizes that a full description of the nature of moral existence requires giving an account of this natural morality. Brunner's remarks on the place of reason in ethics, therefore, presuppose two different kinds of morality, governed by two different standards of judgment. On the one hand, there is the moral realm, where the terms "good" and "bad" are the essential words; on the other hand, there is what we might designate the religious realm, where the theological terms "sin" and "faith" are appropriate. What is ultimately important, Brunner says, is the relationship with God for which man was created and to which he is called, not his external "moral" goodness or badness. Because the core of sin is unbelief, i.e., the withdrawal from a personal relationship with God, the opposite of sin is not virtue, but faith (PR, 89). There are gradations of human moral behavior which are not insignificant. But even the best of human moral endeavor has no saving value; it does not justify a man before God.

The two types of evaluation could be expressed by distinguishing between "moral value" and "redemptive value" or "religious value." The latter two alternative ways of expressing the nature of the value on the religious level should not be taken as an indication that man by himself can acquire value in the sight of God; rather, they indicate that the source of that value is the Redeemer who gives man the possibility of righteousness. Brunner never establishes a consistent terminology for discussing the two kinds of morality, and therefore he uses the terms "moral" and "good" equivocally throughout his writings. Sometimes he speaks of the "merely moral" in contrast to the realm of faith; but he also uses the expression "truly moral" to refer to that which is done in faith. Knowledge of "external" goodness is contrasted with "true, final moral knowledge," which is ultimately "identical with knowledge of God" (D, II, 227). Brunner speaks of the good in the limited sense of "morally" good or "so-called" good or "outwardly" good, but also of good "in the ultimate sense." Even if Brunner's terminology is not consistently established, at least his thought is clear enough if we keep in mind the distinction between "moral" value and "religious" value. Moral goodness will issue from religious goodness, since the man who has faith in God and is obedient to him will strive to do the morally good in his "outward actions" (DI, 145). But one does not attain the faith relationship with God by moral endeavor.

The primary focus of Brunner's ethic is the moral life of the Christian, not that of the unbeliever; therefore, he speaks of good most frequently as it is related to faith rather than about the "merely moral" kind of goodness. "True" goodness means obedience to God just because it is obedience. Indeed, Brunner even says that the good is simply to have faith and that the really evil is alienation from God (DI, 72).

When attention is directed toward the good "in the full sense," the difference between believer and unbeliever becomes most evident. Considered on this level, the unbeliever can do no good. Of course, no merely human action is good when measured by the divine standard, not even the best action of the Christian, for there is no work which has not been achieved at least in part by sinful wills. No one loves God with an undivided heart; hence no one is really obedient to him (DI, 145, 281-83). True goodness cannot result from "the feverish intensity of effort";

rather, genuine goodness must descend from above. The Christian's recognition of the divine origin of true goodness distinguishes him from the unbeliever (DI, 162-63, 74, 84).

> The believer alone clearly perceives that the Good, as it is recognized in faith, is the sole good, and that all that is otherwise called good cannot lay claim to this title, at least not in the ultimate sense of the word. It is precisely faith and faith alone which knows this: that alone is good which God does. (DI, 90)

Because God alone is truly good, apart from God man can do nothing but sin (MR, 274). Therefore, all man's natural morality makes no difference ultimately.

As we shall see in more detail shortly, Brunner does acknowledge the possibility of externally good actions on the part of the unbeliever. He even recognizes that the non-Christian can act from better and worse motives, understood in the merely moral sense. He further admits that the morally good of natural morality is closer to correspondence with the will of God than the morally bad. But the point is that ultimately, "in the last resort," the fact of "being or not being a sinner has nothing to do with the difference between the morally 'good' and the morally 'evil'" (MR, 154-55). We are all sinners, and this means that so far as our relationship to God is concerned the "difference between so-called good and so-called bad no longer comes into consideration" (OF, 40). Although God sees the distinction between good and evil in the usual sense of those words, considered "on that level and within that sphere where Paul writes 'all have sinned' these 'good and bad' considerations have really no significance" (OF, 41). The central message of Christian faith is not primarily concerned with the question of virtue or vice, good or evil, in the ethical sense; the alternative is between sin and faith (MR, 274). Although it is possible that a man on his own may do some good outwardly, his "inmost heart" is sinful. Not only does he sin, not only is he sinful, but he is a sinner, and no moral effort can extricate him from that situation (DI, 70-71). Thus even though external adherence to the Ten Commandments is a fulfillment of the divine will within the limits of merely moral goodness, the justitia civilis, this kind of external obedience takes place entirely within the realm of sin and hence it "stands under the wrath of God and does not justify a man in the sight of God" (MR, 531). Moral gradation simply does not ultimately count in the sight of God (DI, 175).

The fundamental reason for this unfavorable evaluation of natural moral effort is its legalistic character. The moral knowledge that the unbeliever possesses is knowledge of God's law severed from knowledge of God himself (MR, 246). The law embodies the "material" requirements of the will of God, i.e., it defines appropriate external behavior. But this means defining the will of God as "doing something definite," whereas the fundamental will of God involves an existence, being "in Christ" (D, II, 222). The law is a misunderstanding of the will of God because it is "abstract" and "impersonal" (RR, 333). The knowledge of the will of God that the natural reason can attain is knowledge of that will as impersonal law and not as the personal command of God.

God's law separated from knowledge of his love and his covenant is the nomos of Paul, the law of works righteousness (D, II, 217). Rational thinking about morality is always thinking in accordance with law. Since reason goes only as far as the law goes and no farther, rational thought is necessarily legalistic (DI, 325; MR, 246; D, I, 171). The reason can know a great deal about what God wills, even to the extent of knowing that love of the neighbor is the content of his will. But even the knowledge of the commandment of love as the summary of all commandments is knowledge of the law of love, not the command of love (RR, 325). Since law as a statute necessarily contains an impersonal element, the perfect will of God cannot be fully summed up in any law, not even the law of love (MR, 158). Because the law of love has the character of an impersonal rule, it has the effect of giving men control over their morality and hence of inspiring them to attempt self-justification.

In Brunner's opinion the most pressing moral problem from the religious point of view is not the problem of lawlessness, but of legalism, the attempt to gain security through strict adherence to moral rules. The natural reason's knowledge of the will of God always involves the error of thinking that the good which God demands is something that we can and must achieve in our own strength. But the man who thinks that such legal obedience fulfills the will of God shows "by this very fact that he has no idea of the will of God" (MR, 160-61; DI, 115). Thus Brunner asserts that moralism, with its legalism and self-righteousness, is "at all times the worst enemy of true morality" (DI, 57). Since the legalistic point of view constitutes the point at which man is farthest away from God, Brunner contends that morality, in the "merely" moral sense, is evil, in the religious sense (DI, 71-72). The fact that I as a natural man conceive of my responsibility as legal responsibility to an impersonal law means that I am really very far from God, since the impersonal element in the law interferes with the meeting between person and person, making impossible the direct relation both between the Divine Thou and me and between other thous and me (MR, 158). Even though I may be "morally" very virtuous, as an unbeliever my morality is the legal obedience of a servant, not the joyful obedience of a son. Hence my "doing good" and my "doing evil" are both sin (MR, 127).

The Range and Limits of Natural Morality

Setting aside the question of religious or redemptive value, and dealing only with the realm of the "merely" moral, let us ask Brunner what he conceives to be the extent of natural moral knowledge and the means by which natural men obtain moral knowledge. Since Brunner asserts that the sinful condition of all men in no way excludes the truth that "there is much good in human life, both physically and spiritually as well as morally," we can understand a great deal about Brunner's view of the relation of religion and morality by inquiring about the source and extent of this natural goodness (MR, 275).

We saw in Chapter II that God's will is embedded in the orders of creation. Brunner says that the human aspect in the creation and preservation of God's orders is not due to faith, but to natural considerations of reason. God gives us the orders by means of our reason and he preserves them by means of our reason (DI, 223, 335). In the sphere of the orders, natural impulse and reason provide the "constitutive element" for human action. Since the orders do not obey the logic of faith or love, but the logic of the human and rational positing of an end, the unbeliever as well as the believer can have some rational knowledge of the requirements of the orders.

> The orders themselves are the subject of a purely rational knowledge. Even the most primitive heathen knows something of these orders--and often he is the very person who knows amazingly more about them than the highly cultivated "Christian" European--and he also has some glimmering of an idea that these "orders" must be maintained. (DI, 220)

Brunner does not bother much with the question of the method by which human reason acquires this knowledge of the requirements of God's orders. Presumably it can involve more or less reflection. The "primitive heathen" probably knows the orders by a kind of intuitive impulse toward social order. The more civilized, rational unbeliever may perceive the requirements of the orders by a more reflective awareness of the necessities of human social life, perhaps even involving a careful analysis of human social experience.

Whatever the technique for arriving at this knowledge, the point is simply that the Christian with his knowledge of revelation is not always necessarily better equipped to perceive the requirements of God's order than is the rational nonbeliever.

> The creation, preservation, and reform of the orders is only indirectly a concern of the obedience of faith; directly, it is a concern of human reason, to which also natural morality belongs....[The believer] can only discover what this better order is, not as a believer, but as a member of his nation, along with his fellow-countrymen, by the use of reason. (DI, 232)

But how can the unbeliever know what reforms are needed in the orders. In so far as natural moral knowledge means perceiving the requirements of the existing orders, it is fairly easy to see how the unbeliever can acquire moral knowledge, since the orders are already "there" in society and all that is needed is to recognize them and submit to them. But by what norms does the unbeliever judge the necessity and direction of reform of the orders? In an earlier chapter, I indicated that there are two norms by which the Christian judged the necessity of reform of an existing order--the test of love and the test of correspondence with the "primal" order of creation. Brunner would probably refuse to grant that the unbeliever could perceive the duty to seek a better order by understanding the requirements of love. Therefore, although Brunner never answers the question himself, we can only assume that the unbeliever makes his judgment by discerning the original intention of the Creator in establishing the order, that is, by perceiving the purpose of the order. However, the unbeliever cannot know the "ultimate" intention of the orders, which is community; he can only know the proximate purpose which governs the particular order. But he can understand that a just order more nearly fulfills the purpose of that order than an unjust one.

The ability of the unbeliever to know something of the external requirements of God's will is the basis for the Christian's cooperation with the unbeliever in the area of social policy (DI, 222).

> Where the orders are concerned, the believer works side by side with the unbeliever. This is true also of the demand for a "better order." It is not necessary to be a Christian to see that a certain order is unjust. Even though we may not believe in the lex naturae in the old sense of the word, we do know that there is a very far-reaching sensus communis moralis. To this we can and ought to appeal where we are concerned with the creation of better orders--and also for fuller obedience to the existing orders. The feeling for what is humane and inhumane, for that which furthers and that which destroys life, for that which is fair and that which is unfair, can (and should) always be presupposed in every "fellow-citizen" without enquiring into the question of his religious faith. (DI, 232)

Cooperation on the basis of natural morality or justitia civilis is possible because of the "competence of reason" in such matters as the legal system, the state, and ordinary morality (MR, 530).

The existence of natural moral knowledge is not merely a theoretical possibility, but an empirical fact. A sense of moral responsibility constitutes an essential part of human nature that can never be lost, so that men cannot escape from the law written indelibly in their hearts. Although some natural men are more aware of their responsibility than others, no human being is without some sense of responsibility, nor has any human society existed without some kind of moral code (MR, 63, 157, 177-78). Not only do men have a sense of right and wrong; there is even some fairly general agreement defining some of the areas of obligation (RR, 323). Brunner further suggests that men and even peoples know more of the law of God than one might judge merely from watching their behavior (RR, 71).

Brunner goes beyond the descriptive level of observing that men have a conscience. He contends that the sense of obligation connected with the rational perception of the orders is indirectly and in a fragmentary form a kind of knowledge of the will of God. The "primitive heathen" of whom Brunner speaks seems to sense that the orders are in some way "commanded" by a higher authority. Although in this form the will of God is only imperfectly known, still the orders are a gift of God and whoever submits to them is "in some way or another" obeying God, even though he does not know it (DI, 220-21).

Brunner acknowledges that there are within the realm of natural morality good men and bad men. There are men who are selfish and seek their own profit, men who are unfair businessmen and tyrants at home; and there are men who "give themselves freely, often making astounding sacrifices, thinking ever and only of others, desiring nothing but to serve others and to do good" (OF, 39). Brunner contends that it is most important to distinguish both between greater and lesser offenses, cold-blooded murder being surely worse than an unkind and hurtful word, and between morally commendable and morally culpable conduct.

> There is an obvious difference between faithful and unfaithful married partners, between officials who are conscientious in the performance of their duties and those who are careless and unreliable, between people who give themselves pains to do good and who achieve a large measure of goodness, and those who have gone to the dogs, to whom all that is moral is a matter of complete indifference, indeed, who find it rather ridiculous. (MR, 154)

Brunner's discussion of natural morality focuses on the moral behavior of the unbeliever. But he is not unconcerned with the unbeliever's character or disposition. In one of his rash statements, Brunner asserts that Christianity's emphasis on the "doer" of the action distinguishes Christian morality from all natural morality. Natural morality and ethics "seeks exclusively to answer the question 'What ought I to do?'" (DI, 70). In other words, natural morality and ethics "deals only with conduct, not with the person who acts" (DI, 70). From a theological point of view there may be some validity to the assertion, if Brunner is simply trying to point out that natural morality does not take account of man's sinful weakness and does not reach the depth of his personal existence. But as a description of natural morality on the "merely" moral level, the statement is manifestly false. That there are countless "secular" ethical systems which are concerned with the character of the agent seems so obvious as hardly to require argument. Aristotle's concern with the character of the good man and Kant's assertion that there is nothing good except the good will are two major cases in point, and Hume seems at least as emphatic as Brunner in saying that the agent's motive or character, not his action, is the proper object for moral appraisal. Likewise, on the moral level, there are undoubtedly countless men who do seek to cultivate a good character in addition to their efforts to do good actions.

Brunner recognizes that in the sphere of natural morality there are indeed gradations of character as well as of conduct. It is not merely that men can know what dispositions are required of them; they can even make progress in that direction. There are differences between "the decent and the indecent, between upright, conscientious, honourable men and those who even contend heroically for the Good, and their opposites" (DI, 175). Brunner speaks with admiration for the natural morality of the "gentleman" or the "just man" or the "good citizen" whose life is spent in the service of the ideal of justice or humanity (DI, 183). He recognizes that at least some natural men can possess a selfless, sincere intention of justice and are capable of making sacrifices for its realization (JSO, 259). Of such men of high moral character Brunner says,

> The practical idealism and humanism of the doctor who wears himself out in the service of suffering human beings, of the judge who cares more for a just verdict than for his own security, of the devoted Labour leader or statesman, of the scholar, or the minor official with his fidelity to duty, of the self-sacrificing mother who gives herself joyfully to her family, all this, which is included under the heading of the justitia civilis, is also--if we may dare to put it so--indispensable, highly valued, and commanded by God Himself, within the economy of a Christian people. (DI, 184)

The non-Christian can have moral earnestness and good will, just as the Christian can (DI, 232). It is even possible for the natural man at least occasionally to achieve "selfless" actions (DI, 69). Brunner even asserts in rather vague terms that the natural man is capable of something similar to Christian love. Brunner's thinking on this point is never very clear. He alludes to the "natural analogy" to Christian love provided by a dynamic sense of equity, and he refers to the love of a mother as the nearest natural analogue to Christian love (DI, 182, 332). Yet he also asserts that natural love can never measure up to Christian love because natural love is always partisan and selective. Christian love is love without conditions, love of the enemy, love of a man simply because he is a man, and not because of his value. The natural man, however, always loves his friend, his child, his country. Even mother love is partisan--it is love of her child (DI, 304-6, 332). Yet in one of his latest statements, Brunner clearly says that it would be "foolish to maintain that the non-Christian knew nothing at all of agape, of self-giving love" (TEB, 348).

How this love, even the mere approximation to Christian love, can be accounted for within the limits of Brunner's system is one of the unresolved problems of his theological ethic. Love is only the gift of God; and the gift is only available to those who in faith accept it. How is it possible, then, for some men outside of faith to act from the motive of love, even a poor analogy to Christian love, instead of from a spirit of legalism? One explanation might be that the disposition itself is cultivated in a spirit of legalism. Brunner himself refers to the "legally" good disposition of some natural men (MR, 153-54; M, 293). Brunner stresses the legalistic nature of natural morality excessively, so that his description of the good dispositions of natural men is simply inaccurate. But from a Kantian point of view, the idea of legally good dispositions makes perfectly good sense, for Kant maintains that love can only possess moral value in so far as it can be demanded as a duty. However, I would argue that Brunner's idea of the legality of the good disposition not only is empirically a misrepresentation of the moral experience of the unbeliever and psychologically unsound as a description of the way in which men's dispositions are formed, but also that the idea simply does not make sense within Brunner's theological system. What is wrong with legalism is that the proper outward action is performed, but it is done from a legalistic disposition. But how, then, can a disposition be "legally" good? I think that Brunner is committed to saying that if it is legal, it cannot be good. Unlike Kant, Brunner does not think that a "good" disposition can be commanded in the legal sense.

Brunner never deals directly with the problem that I am posing about the source of the unbeliever's approximation to Christian love, but several other ways of handling it may be suggested in some remarks obliquely related to the problem. On one occasion he admits that the natural man can occasionally act unselfishly, but he implies that it is almost accidental and he adds that the unbeliever cannot do so consistently (DI, 69). In another passage he implied that the humanist is a parasite who is able to attain a partially loving disposition only because he has been influenced by the Christian teaching of love, and that the good will would disappear in the absence of the Christian influence. Or again, he maintains that the non-Christian can have some knowledge of agape, but cannot know the "full meaning" of love. In this connection he says that the difference between the Christian and non-Christian lies in the radicality of the Christian's understanding of love and in the assertion of its sole ultimate validity (TEB, 348).

But clearly none of these explanations is possible for Brunner, unless there is some significant change in his basic presuppositions. The suggestion that man can act selflessly occasionally but not consistently is inconsistent with Brunner's contention that love is never a human possibility, but can only be a divine gift. The explanation that the humanist is a parasite is equally unsatisfactory. Entirely apart from the argument that such individuals can be found in areas where the Christian teaching is unknown, including men in the pre-Christian era, the explanation does not tell us how the individual who has heard of the Christian teaching about love, but remains a man "in revolt," can have his disposition influenced by the teaching of the church without coming to have faith in God. If faith is the necessary condition for receiving the gift of God, then it is difficult to know how simply being exposed to Christian values could enable the unbeliever to internalize those values, yet remain entirely outside of faith. Finally, the admission that the unbeliever can know something of agape, but not its full meaning, is also unsatisfactory, unless Brunner is willing to qualify his assertion that love is only a divine possibility.

Either Brunner must admit that love is sometimes and to some extent a human possibility, which he could do without giving up the contention that consistent and perfect agapistic determination is possible only in faith, or he must admit that the nominal unbeliever who does not confess Jesus Christ has some knowledge of God as Love, which would mean giving up the position that the unbeliever knows God only as the God of Wrath. I am inclined to the position that all love has God as its source, that God works lovingly with all men, even where his name is not known, and that some men are able and willing to allow themselves to be determined at least to some extent by this love, even when they are only vaguely aware of him who gives them love. For Brunner to make such an admission, however, would require significant alterations of his theological position and radical changes in his view of ethics, including a more universalistic understanding of the relation of religion and morality.[1]

Although Brunner cannot adequately account for the existence of the good dispositions that he seems to know natural men do sometimes attain, he does admit that men outside of faith can possess valid moral knowledge. Perhaps many or even most men do not possess a great deal of this knowledge, but the fact that some natural men can apprehend a high degree of moral truth proves that such knowledge is possible for the human reason. The achievement of this rational moral knowledge by only a few only proves that the rest of mankind does not possess a great deal of reason (RR, 323).

But Brunner also recognizes significant limitations on the natural man's rational moral knowledge. We have already noted that the good that a man can do apart from faith is only relatively good, good in the "merely" moral sense, which has no value in justifying a man before God (MR, 309). But the natural man cannot be completely good even in the more limited sense of "morally" good. The "heathen" have some knowledge of the divine orders, but this natural knowledge of God's will is "to a large extent dimmed or obscured" (RR, 322). Brunner agrees with what he takes to be the position of the Reformers that "sin obscures the capacity of human reason even in spheres which are accessible to rational knowledge" (JSO, 91).

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[1] This has been worked out especially in Karl Rahner's notion of the possibility of "Anonymous Christianity" everywhere because of the universal presence of the gracious God to all men. See Karl Rahner, Theological Investigations, Vol. I, trans. Karl H. Krager (London: Darton, Longman, and Todd, 1966), pp. 131-32, 144-45.

In one section of Revelation and Reason, Brunner explicates his understanding of the limits of natural moral knowledge. The four limits that he mentions are all closely related and sometimes difficult to distinguish from one another. The first limitation is that the natural moral perception cannot know the lawgiver behind the law. I have already indicated that the inability to know him who gives the law means that the natural man cannot be justified before God; but now the point is that he cannot in practice attain even the degree of natural moral goodness that is theoretically possible. Brunner says that natural morality cannot be nearly as independent *de facto* as it is *de jure*. The thrust of the argument, which is somewhat psychological in nature, is that the moral law, deprived of its reference to the divine lawgiver, is in danger of losing its "convincing power."

> The power of influence and of conviction of the moral law appears to be connected to a high degree with a supporting background of religious convictions. Where the consciousness of the Holy disappears, where the religious element becomes blurred, or even is questioned and regarded as superstition, there the moral is menaced with becoming purely convention and thus perverted. (RR, 326)

When the consciousness of a sacred command no longer supports ethics, ethics is reduced to expediency (RR, 327).

This understanding of the necessity for divine authority to provide a sense of moral seriousness perhaps explains Brunner's view of much of Western morality. He asserts that even the non-Christian "unconsciously absorbs Christian influences" and bears a Christian imprint whether he likes it or not. Brunner refers to that large part of our intellectual culture which has its origin in Christianity and which has become the common possession of Western man as a kind of "secularized Christianity." Especially does the culture of the West depend upon Christianity for the idea of personality and humanity. But, Brunner asserts, the capital of Christianity is not inexhaustible, and though the feeling for the personal and the human which derives from Christianity may outlive its origin for a time, it cannot be too long-lived. The decay of religion leads to moral rigidity and then to a breakdown of all morality. Humanity without religion has never been a historical force capable of resistance (MR, 458-59).

Likewise, Brunner argues that the humanitarian ethic, which is a real possibility, is essentially a parasite on

Christianity. The humanitarian idea was discovered in connection with the Christian revelation, and though it can continue to exist independently for a time, it is really only a "marginal possibility within a civilization in which Christianity is still a living force." In the absence of such a civilization, it would soon become unintelligible and would cease to be a current idea (DI, 600). This view of the necessity of Christian values for the maintenance of even natural morality is the basis of Brunner's idea of a Christian civilization, a subject to which we shall return in the next chapter.

A second important limitation to the natural moral reason is the incapacity to know evil in its depths. Natural reason can know something of the nature of evil, but it cannot understand radical evil. Because the reason itself is involved in evil, infected and blinded by sin, it is deceived as to the true nature of evil. According to Brunner, Kant did come close to understanding the radicality of evil, which brought him to the doorstep of faith, but he saw that his discovery was inconsistent with rationality and he later turned his back on his doctrine of radical evil. The moral significance of this inability of reason to know evil in its depths apparently is that it leaves the natural man with a "Pelagian point of view," that is, it permits men to think that "man can at any time, from his own inner core of goodness, free himself from evil, or can indeed 'pull himself together' to the good" (RR, 329). Brunner may intend this point merely as a way of repeating his case that natural morality can make no difference so far as religious value is concerned; but I think he intends it as an indication that man's ability to do even the "externally" good of natural morality is also limited by the evil of his nature and that this inability is further heightened by his lack of awareness of his limitations.

The third limitation is that the rational ethic is inherently abstract. It considers the "neighbor" merely as a "case," and hence the relation to him is not that of love, but of respect from a sense of duty. The other person is merely an occasion for acting according to one's duty, for reason knows nothing of love (RR, 330-31). The abstractness and impersonality of legal morality has already been touched upon in the discussion of legalism in the previous chapter.

Finally, Brunner stresses the "impotence of the law to create the good will or to overcome evil" (RR, 331). Although the law often tells us what to do, it cannot give us the power to do it. Even when the law reveals the presence of sin, it cannot get rid of it. This point is somewhat similar to one implication of the first limitation discussed above, for it, too, dealt with a lack of power. But there it was noted that the law without religion or without an awareness of God loses its convincing power. Here it is said that the law has no enabling power. Brunner admits that we should not speak of the "absolute" moral impotence of the law. The law can sometimes be the means to the justitia civilis. But even then it cannot provide the proper inmost disposition or temper. The law can demand love, but it cannot awaken it. Since the only true morality is love, genuine morality is possible only when we are "no longer under the law, but are enfolded in the generous love of God" (RR, 331-32).

That the last two limitations involve a reference to love perhaps indicates that the "moral" realm and the "religious" realm cannot be as neatly divided as the original analysis suggested. Indeed, the kind of proportional statement that we noted in the treatment of Brunner's general doctrine of revelation and reason seems to acknowledge that the limitations of the human reason are not defined by sharp boundaries, but shade into that realm of knowledge which primarily belongs to revelation. Brunner argues that rational knowledge becomes distorted and needs correction or modification in all questions that concern human beings as persons. Applied to ethics this principle would mean that the non-Christian's moral knowledge of the social order is much less "darkened" than his understanding of personal morality. Some matters which are related to ethics, Brunner suggests, are completely within the competency of natural reason, such as the principle of the division of power in the state (RR, 380). In so far as law and politics involve only technical questions, for example questions in juridical technique, sin does not hinder the function of the natural reason. But in the fundamental questions of the nature and obligations of law and state, there are fundamental points of view which affect our whole philosophy of life, and here the "understanding of man as person, and of the human community as a community of persons, comes in sight" (RR, 385-86). Therefore, even though justice is a rational matter, a "clear [emphasis added] knowledge of the principles of mundane justice can only be obtained from the knowledge of the Creator and His will as it is revealed to us in Scriptural history and doctrine" (JSO, 91-92). Again Brunner asserts,

> We cannot be just, our laws cannot create an order of justice, if these natural facts [the orders of creation] are not acknowledged and respected as lying in the will of God. (JSO, 89)

In his Gifford lectures, Brunner states his conviction that the only hope for the survival of Western civilization depends upon a revival of Christian faith. The decline of Christian influence has caused the progressive decay of civilization, and its only hope is a renewed awareness of the true foundation of civilization and the importance of the Christian tradition (CC, II, 132, 138). Even in Revelation and Reason, where Brunner seems to grant much more autonomy to natural morality, he expresses his view that the world situation clearly indicates that "all culture needs a Christian foundation" (RR, 395).

Thus the limitations on natural morality now seem rather serious. Brunner seems to have taken back a good bit of the credit he had appeared to give to natural moral reason. Perhaps he was simply unable to assimilate systematically all he had experienced. On the one hand, he undoubtedly knew of individual cases of human goodness which had no apparent connection with Christian faith. On the other hand, he lived in a world that seemed so often in chaos, a world which seemed to be rent asunder for the lack of Christian charity. World War I was followed by the Great Depression, which was followed in turn by World War II. Brunner attempted to account for his divergent experiences by acknowledging the existence of a viable natural morality and then qualifying his postion. But he offers no finally satisfactory systematic account of the limits of rational knowledge. He ends by disclaiming that theology has any further responsibility for the development of a theory of the presuppositions and limitations of natural rational knowledge, and he turns that task over to Christian philosophy (D, II, 31).

Brunner's final retreat from the question of the extent of the competency of natural morality makes it difficult to evaluate his over-all position on that question. Certainly his ability to distinguish between "moral" value and "religious" value, which allowed him room within his system to acknowledge the existence of real goodness on the "merely" moral level, was absolutely essential. Any Christian ethic that cannot account for the very obvious fact of natural morality is clearly defective, and there seems to be no other way of doing this within the limits of Brunner's system than by distinguishing between two kinds of goodness.

Despite the ambiguity and incompleteness of Brunner's treatment of the subject, I think we can identify in his writings two major limitations of natural morality. The first is a practical limitation, the failure of motive power. Although the natural man can theoretically possess a great deal of moral knowledge, the absence of the divine authority means that morality loses its seriousness, so that in practice men do not have the will to do all that they may know. The second limitation is a theoretical limitation, extending even to the area of moral knowledge itself; namely, moral knowledge and subsequent moral action are limited by the unbeliever's incompetence in the sphere of the personal. The thrust of Brunner's position is expressed in the statement of a proportional distortion of rational knowledge, to which his philosophy of personalism commits him. Because of this personalism, the major distinction between Christian and non-Christian morality seems to be the same as the difference between social and personal morality. In the area of social ethics, the Christian and the non-Christian seem to arrive at essentially the same conclusions, though the reasoning process of the Christian goes deeper. But on the personal level, the Christian's deeper knowledge of the personal nature of love makes a significant moral difference. Because Brunner thinks that personal relations are the prime moral value, he implies that Christianity is finally a matter of the heart, and hence Christian morality is essentially internal. But the natural man is excluded from this personalistic morality and does not know the Personal God who stands behind the realm of the personal. The knowledge of God that is available through General Revelation, i.e., through God's imprint on the world, is impersonal knowledge. The realm of the personal is the blind spot of the unbeliever, and the nearer a matter comes to the personal, the less clearly is the unbeliever able to acquire genuine knowledge concerning it.

Brunner's assumption about the limitations imposed by the personal sphere would seem to imply not only that knowledge of the personal is not available to the unbeliever, but also that personal relationships in the true sense are impossible between two unbelievers or between an unbeliever and a man of faith. Yet Brunner must have been aware that such personal relationships do exist and are often very deep indeed. This problem points up essentially the same weakness of Brunner's thought that we noted earlier in the discussion of the possibility of love on the part of the non-Christian. It is a problem that Brunner cannot resolve without some modification of his understanding either of personalism itself or of the impersonal nature of General Revelation.

Finally, Brunner's personalism also intensifies his preoccupation with legalism. As I noted earlier, Brunner uses the word legalism to denote self-justification and the rule nature of "legal" obligation, the impersonal and abstract character of which renders legalism a functional opposite of personalism. Because the unbeliever is systematically excluded from the personal by Brunner's theological presuppositions, he is automatically committed to legalism, a tenet that lacks empirical verification. Once again the rigidity of Brunner's theology and ethic is to be traced to his programmatic devotion to the philosophy of personalism.

Brunner's use of that philosophy has much to commend it. It maintains an ethical emphasis too often lost in the preoccupation with social ethics; it revives the notion of a personal God and provides an adequate basis for personal religious experience; and it prevents theology from being understood propositionally. But on the other hand, one need only exaggerate the case slightly to assert that whatever is wrong in Brunner's theology and ethic can be traced ultimately to the excessive emphasis on this doctrine of personalism.

Reason in Christian Morality

For the most part this chapter has dealt with the role of reason in the natural moral knowledge of the non-Christian man; but the remarks on that subject have implications for understanding the nature of the Christian's moral perception as well. On the basis of what has already been said about Brunner's ethic, it should be clear that for the Christian, too, reason is a significant source of ethical knowledge in a similar manner and degree as for the non-Christian. The reason of the unbeliever is so infected by sin, however, that his ethical knowledge is impaired; the sinful reason is not in practice capable of achieving all the knowledge that is theoretically available to reason.

But when Brunner discusses the redeemed man, he does not mention a restoration of the reason to the full power theoretically possible for it, with the restored reason correcting the errors involved in the rational knowledge of the autonomous reason. It is not the "restored" reason, but the knowledge of revelation or the knowledge of faith, that corrects the errors of the sinful reason. The degree of "correction" or "modification" that is necessary varies, of course, in direct proportion to the degree of the distortion; in the case of the idea of God, Brunner says, it is a matter not of correction, but of "complete substitution" of the knowledge of faith for the knowledge of reason. In ethics, the law in man's heart has been obscured by sin, and it must be illuminated and hence clarified by revelation (D, II, 227; RR, 383).

Through revelation the believer receives an understanding that the range of rational knowledge is limited. He also learns that man is a creature of God and is responsible to God. Above all, the believer knows that the will of God is that men should love, that they should live in fellowship with God and other men. The knowledge of faith given to the believer does not, of course, mean that he has complete knowledge. Even the believer is still a sinner, whose sin continues to distort his knowledge. Moreover, even to the believer _qua_ believer revelation is incomprehensible--it is not "insight," but vision in a "dark mirror," which points to the truth that will be perfectly clear only in eternity (PR, 96). Faith gives the believer a new point of view, a new way of interpreting life as life lived under God, but not a perfect understanding of all reality. The Christian does not differ from the non-Christian in possessing a great deal more rational knowledge, but in seeing things from a different perspective. To a great extent, this difference in perspective is at the point of a personalistic perspective on life. But apart from this perspective, the Christian must employ his rational faculties in much the same way as the non-Christian in discerning his moral obligation.

A large part of what Brunner means when he discusses the function of reason in Christian morality, probably far more than he realizes, is the application of technical reason to technical aspects of moral problems. Since every attempt to do anything in the world requires technical action, what Brunner has to say about the technical is of utmost importance for ethics.

In the very beginning of the first systematic statement of his ethical position, Brunner calls attention to the distinction between the ethical and the technical. He notes that there is, "strictly speaking," no such thing as "ethical _conduct_." The ethical is merely a way of ordering technical action, scientific action, and so on.

> The ethical element is not a special material of life, but it is a particular way of ordering all the functions and relations of our life, whether they be technical, artistic, or anything else. (DI, 19)

Brunner does mention the "act of the will" as being possible entirely apart from any technical action; but any time we perform an external action, we must do it through technical means, so that "ethical action is always, at the same time, technical action" (DI, 261). Brunner seems to mean that the ethical and the technical are not two kinds of action competing on the same level, but that they are two aspects of human action operating on different levels. The technical is concerned with the physical process of acting, "the material of life itself." The ethical is concerned with the way in which the physical action is ordered, for example, the purpose for which it is done. Brunner cites the example of feeding a hungry man. The process of preparing some soup and delivering it to the man is technical, and ultimately physiological; it is muscular movement. The moral element only enters as a function of the order to which the act belongs, i.e., it is an act of mercy (DI, 19). The distinction between the two aspects should not be used to detract from the unity of the act in reality. Brunner says that the distinction is an abstract one, that is, that it is an artificial distinction applied to human action to clarify some aspects of it, but in actuality it is impossible to separate the ethical from the technical sphere (DI, 251).

Brunner employs the word "technical" in several degrees of generality. In the most narrow sense, "technical" means "working on things" in the material world (DI, 263). Technical action and technology in this sense consist in the physical process of production and distribution of things of value, of "goods," i.e., things which meet a spiritual or physical need of man (DI, 250). Bordering on these "practical" arts and skills, but lying beyond the first level as less directly productive, is the area of the fine arts and the sciences. In a third sense, Brunner uses the term "technical" to include the factor of social cooperation in the process of production. The production of goods does not involve simply the "technical" manufacture of "things," but their manufacture in organized cooperation with other people (DI, 263). To cover the whole range of activities involved in the process of production and distribution of all that can be called "goods," including the technical sphere in the narrower sense, and art, science, government, and all the other forms of life which are connected with the rational nature of man, Brunner employs a word which can perhaps best be translated as "the cultural skills."[1]

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[1] The German word which Brunner says he coined to cover this range of activities is the compound word Kulturkunst, which Miss Wyon translates as "art of culture" (DI, 267). Because the English word "art" is increasingly losing its connotation of "skillfulness" or "craftsmanship" in common usage, the translation "cultural skills" seems a better rendering of Brunner's meaning.

Brunner's interest in the cultural skills primarily concerns the "autonomy" of this aspect of life. What he means by the autonomy of these factors is that they place limits on an individual's action and are to some degree beyond the control of his will. Indeed, Brunner even goes so far as to say that the will is never able to do what it would like and that external action is always impure, simply because external action always involves doing something with things rather than dealing directly with the neighbor. Two external factors limit the ability of a person to act externally as he would like. First is the autonomy of the technical sphere in the limited sense of the merely physical component of production, what we might call "mechanical" or "industrial" technics. The things with which we must work prescribe how we must treat them if we are to use them in creating goods. The "material" which the will must use in external action is "subject to its own laws." The second factor is that technical work in the narrower sense requires social cooperation, which we might call "social technics." The individual cannot act apart from the action of all. Because the individual must act in conjunction with others, his ability to act is restricted by the "general practice of society" within which the work must be done. Brunner refers to this limiting factor as "social autonomy" (DI, 261, 244).

Obviously what I ought to do by way of external action is in part a function of what is mechanically and socially possible. Brunner formulates the ethical implications of social autonomy in two "laws."

> *My necessary co-operative action is determined not only by my situation and my will, but also by the situation and will of my necessary co-operators*. The more co-operators are concerned the smaller does the share of the single individual factor in co-operation become, that is, *my* co-operative share. With this we must also combine a second law: *the difference between the product to be attained by means of co-operation, and the aim of one's own will, is conditioned by the degree of homogeneity or heterogeneity of the will and situation of the co-operators*. (DI, 264)

Thus in calculating the course of action he must take, the agent must take account of the realistic possibilities of accomplishing the intended result, both in terms of the material limitations of the situation and in light of the difficulties posed by one's limited ability to influence his "co-operators" to perform what seems to him the best course of action.

The issues which I have been discussing tend to be confused when Brunner introduces a different kind of autonomy. Autonomy in the sense of social and mechanical factors of technology implies the limitation of the ability of the individual to act. But there is a second sense of autonomy, indicating the independence of the processes of production and the cultural skills from religion and morality generally. This sense of autonomy means that the production of goods does not arise from the motive of morality, but from the ends issuing naturally from man's physical, mental, and social nature. The development of cultural skills does not require a moral impulse in order to exist, but depends simply on man's rational nature (DI, 267). The orders of creation are the result of man's natural impulse toward social order and his reasoned analysis of the "necessary presuppositions of our natural and psychical existence" (DI, 336, 223). The production of culture in the form of socially organized civilized life depends essentially on a "rational impulse," not on a sense of moral obligation.

Brunner qualifies this assertion of the autonomy of culture by saying that, in actual practice, cooperation in the creation of civilization requires more than a temporary whim, so that a measure of moral discipline and responsibility is necessary to ensure the success of the social enterprise. Moreover, he suggests that man's very desire for the goods of culture and his scale of values reflect man's sense of human dignity and his "philosophy of life" (DI, 269). Presumably the point is that a man's "philosophy of life" provides the moral impetus to create or maintain a social order.

The force of both these qualifications is that the sphere of the cultural skills in practice requires a moral impulse for its support that it does not require in theory. I do not wish to take sides on that question. My concern is to clarify an issue which seems to me obscured in Brunner's treatment of the question of autonomy in this second sense. When Brunner asserts that culture is autonomous in this sense, he means, I think, that within the limits of his qualifications culture can be created by natural impulse with no necessity for a sense of moral obligation supporting it. But this does not mean that the creation of culture is not subject to moral evaluation. Brunner is presumably in agreement with my position, but his discussions of the technical and of the autonomy of culture often obscure this point.

In order to see more clearly how the technical and the moral are related, let us look at two examples of human action. First let us take the action of firing a rifle, a technical action which in itself is morally indifferent. Whether the act is a moral issue or not is determined in part by the context in which it occurs. The rifleman may have the same purpose or motivation or "impulse" for firing the weapon in either of two cases, say to engage in target practice; but there is a great moral difference between engaging in target practice on a carefully regulated target range and doing so in Central Park. The rifleman's ignorance of the bad consequences that may follow from firing a gun in Central Park does not automatically remove his act from the arena of moral evaluation, rendering it amoral or non-moral. Of course, his intention affects our evaluation of his action and his ignorance of the possible consequences may in some cases mitigate his culpability, or even excuse him entirely. But even if the result of the moral evaluation is the full exculpation of the agent, the fact that the act was a morally significant one requiring that moral evaluation depended upon the life context of the act, including its possible consequences, and not simply upon the agent's awareness that the act constituted a moral issue.[1]

For the second illustration, I will elaborate upon one of Brunner's own examples. The mechanics of building a church, both as an architectural and constructional feat and as a financial operation, is a technical matter; but that a church instead of a cinema is built is a nontechnical matter requiring a value judgment, perhaps a judgment of moral value (DI, 245). Presumably the impulse for building a church is a moral and religious one, though this might not be the case; the project could be undertaken as an act of human pride, for example, if it was done merely because all the other denominations in town had new buildings. But again the moral value of the action, in this case a whole series of actions, does not depend entirely on its being initiated by a moral and religious impulse. Indeed, it may even be judged immoral in spite of its well-meaning moral and religious impulse, as might be the case if the building of the church meant the neglect of pressing and remediable social problems. But the decision on the goal of an action is not the only ethical issue. Even the question how something is done is subject to moral scrutiny. Pursuing further Brunner's example of the building of a church, we can see how the whole action of building a church would change in moral character if the construction crew consisted of slaves, or perhaps even of members of an all-white building trade-union.

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[1] There may be some who would define morality exclusively in terms of the intention of the agent. But most moralists would agree that the life context of an act, including its consequences, at least helps to determine whether the act is morally significant, however much the agent's intention may figure in the final moral evaluation of the act.

In these illustrations the technical aspect of the actions could be autonomous in the sense that the laws of nature and society (in the scientific sense of "law") impose certain limitations on the freedom of men to act and in the sense that the actions may not require a moral motive to get started; but the technical is not autonomous in the sense of being exempt from moral evaluation. Thus in the general case of the autonomy of the social order, it is true that man's rational capacities impel him toward the social orders without any necessary sense of moral impulse. But the absence of a moral impulse does not mean that the formation of social orders is not a moral issue. The Christian knows that the drive toward social order is not merely a natural impulse, but also a divine command; hence it would be immoral of man not to seek such social order. Moreover, the kind of structure given to the orders and the way in which they operate are also subject to moral scrutiny.

Brunner seems to be in basic agreement with my interpretation of the relation of the technical and the moral. He says that it would be "unpardonably thoughtless to speak of the ethical neutrality of technology" (DI, 247). Yet he makes some statements about the technical sphere that confuse the issues. The statement, for example, that "creative action is in itself neither ethical nor non-ethical" but that it "ought [emphasis added] to be placed under the jurisdiction of the ethical" is misleading because it may be taken to mean that creative action is not subject to moral evaluation unless the agent subjects it to moral scrutiny (DI, 251). Brunner might better have said that creative action is not in itself ethical, but within a given life context it is a matter for moral evaluation, and in such cases the agent ought to acknowledge that it has this moral aspect.

Likewise, Brunner's remark that the norm for action which produces and distributes goods is "not primarily ethical but technical" only serves to confuse the discussion further (DI, 251). If the technical and the ethical are only two different aspects of one action, which, because they are on two different levels, cannot come into conflict, then it is not helpful to ask which is primary and which is secondary. Brunner increases the confusion by commenting that human action is "partly technical" and "partly ethical" (DI, 239). Rather, we should say that the action is wholly technical with regard to the technique or the mechanical means by which it is accomplished and totally ethical in so far as the total action is judged to be good or bad within the total context of human needs. Likewise, the statement that economics and politics are in "the borderland between technical action and ethics" is very misleading because it implies that the two aspects are independent realms between which there can be a border, whereas they seem to be only two aspects of the same reality (DI, 262).

The ethical element provides the criteria for evaluating the moral value of technical action. But technical knowledge itself can aid the process of moral determination and action in two ways. The two examples of human action which I discussed earlier can illustrate the two ways in which technical knowledge can assist moral deliberation. First, technical knowledge can provide pragmatic information concerning the means of accomplishing ends that are deemed morally valuable or morally obligatory. Technical knowledge could say that accomplishing X requires doing Y and Z, or it could say that the performance of X is impossible given present technical and social conditions. But it cannot make the judgment that X is a good end which ought to be sought, nor can it evaluate the morality of the means Y and Z which are technically necessary for its achievement. To refer to the second example above, technical knowledge provides the "know how" for the building of the church, including knowledge of the material and social limitations inherent in such a project; but it cannot determine whether the church ought to be built. That is a moral question, not a technical one.

Of course, technical knowledge in this first role is quite significant for morality. Brunner's vehement attack on Utopianism rests almost entirely on this point. The Utopian is irresponsible because he does not recognize the technical limits of the historical situation. The man who does not test his proposal for a better order on the basis of practical possibility does a disservice to the social order because he decreases the effectiveness of the present order without really contributing to the creation of a better order. The effect of Utopianism is to push society toward anarchy.

In addition to providing "know how" for accomplishing ends that are deemed morally worthwhile or mandatory, technical knowledge can serve morality in a second way by making us aware of consequences of our action which we might otherwise overlook. I do not mean that the technical knowledge is itself a judgment of the morality or immorality of these consequences; it merely points out what the consequences are which must be submitted to moral judgment. Although the example may seem farfetched, the case of the rifleman described above can illustrate this function of technical reason clearly. The technical knowledge of what happens when a gun is fired, combined with the "technical" knowledge of how Central Park is used by the public, can lead to the technical conclusion that it is a hazard to human life for a rifle to be fired in that public place. The morally sensitive man would then move to the further conclusion that it is morally reprehensible to be the agent creating that hazard, but he reaches this conclusion by making a moral judgment, not simply by virtue of possessing certain technical knowledge.

Thus the technical reason serves morality by determining the means of effecting the morally desirable ends or revealing limitations on action and by revealing certain morally significant consequences of action. Unfortunately, Brunner's analysis of the function of the technical never reaches such clearly stated conclusions. Indeed, he never seems to be entirely clear about the distinction between the technical and moral functions of reason. He sees that technical knowledge is often morally significant, for example in identifying the matrix of possibilities in a given situation and in defining relevant proposals. But he never clearly says that it is the moral reason that must reach a moral judgment, not the technical reason. Thus, when he describes the "material content" of the orders of creation as being subject to the "human reason," he does not show clearly which sense of human reason he means. Occasionally it seems that it is the technical reason that is involved, but in that case the question of moral determination is left unanswered.

To illustrate the point, let me recall the example of the Good Samaritan discussed in Chapter I. In citing this example, Brunner is trying to show the relative roles of love and reason in moral determination. He says that the commandment of love does not tell the Samaritan _what_ he ought to regarding the injured man. What he has to do is determined by the knowledge of the order of creation, i.e., the knowledge of the functions of the human body (D, II, 225). What Brunner does not acknowledge explicitly is that the "reason" in his example is the "technical reason." But the technical reason alone cannot make the moral decision. Brunner has confused the issue by failing to notice the looseness of the word "what." It seems obvious in this case that love does tell the Samaritan what to do, namely, it tells him to try to save the man's life, as Brunner implies in his remark that love instructs the Samaritan, "Do all you can for him." The technical reason then says what must be done in order to achieve this goal. The technical question of what specific actions are necessary to accomplish an end involves a somewhat different use of "what." The ambiguity of the word "what" also confuses Brunner's similar statement in another passage, where he says that the what of Christian action derives from the situation and that the why of the action results from the love of Christ (TEB, 349). I argued in Chapter I that for the Christian love must have some role in determining the what of action if it has any connection with the action at all. The contrast should not be so much what and why as what and how to, with love having a role in determining the what to which technical knowledge must give the answer of how.

Of course, the fact that the technical reason cannot reach moral judgments does not mean that the natural reason cannot make valid moral judgments. But because Brunner never clearly differentiates other functions of reason from technical reason, he never gives a clear account of how the natural reason arrives at its moral judgments. Apparently the non-Christian can reach some correct moral judgments on the basis of natural moral reason, which involves rational functions other than the merely technical one.

But what part does the reason play in the moral deliberation of the Christian? Its role as technical reason is fairly clear, and this is often what is involved when Brunner mentions the reason. But is there a moral reason in the Christian that provides a second source of moral knowledge alongside the knowledge of revelation? In some of his statements, Brunner seems to imply such a dual faculty in the Christian, in which case the moral reason would provide primarily the knowledge of social requirements and the knowledge of revelation would determine the personal morality and the motive for the social morality (D, III, 119). At least it is often the case that the Christian is only different inwardly; he does what everyone else does in the same circumstances, but he does it "in a different spirit" (DI, 253).

But there are other passages in which it is implied that revelation and the gift of grace change the whole perspective of the moral life and even place different demands upon the Christian than those required by the moral reason. Part of the problem with Brunner is that he refers to the respective parts that reason and love play in the Christian moral life, but he never works out clearly and concretely exactly what each contributes and how they work together. Probably it is just as well that he did not attempt any further dissection of the Christian moral life for the purpose of determining the rational and the revealed aspects, for I should think that the two are so enmeshed that it is not only impossible but also undesirable to disentangle them. The change in the disposition that results from God's gift of love undoubtedly affects the whole man, including the way he reasons about moral issues. The moral act of the Christian man is an act of the total man, not the product of a number of discrete entities within the man.

Instead of implying that the Christian and the non-Christian share a common natural moral reason which works the same way in both, but that the Christian also has knowledge of revelation that makes him sometimes act differently than the natural moral reason would dictate, Brunner might have expressed the matter better by saying that the moral deliberation of the Christian is often very similar to that of the non-Christian, but that sometimes the process of reasoning is different because of different factors that the Christian considers relevant, and that even when there is a different process of reasoning, the results may sometimes still be the same, though sometimes they may be different. The moral reason, as I have been using the notion, is not an abstract entity, a piece of mental furniture, that is located somewhere in the psyche of every man. It is rather a way of referring to the rational process of moral deliberation, and it would be strange indeed if this process were not affected by such a drastic change in values as Christian conversion is supposed to effect.

Because of the proportional nature of the distortion of the natural reason by sin, the end result of the moral deliberation of the non-Christian is more likely to coincide with that of the Christian in the sphere of social action than in the sphere of the personal. Thus the Christian and the non-Christian have more grounds for cooperation in the realm of social action than they do in the area of personal morality. Brunner describes three possible ways in which Christian social action may be related to the action of non-Christians.

First is simple cooperation with other people in sustaining existing orders in order to maintain social order and prevent social chaos. For such work the Christian need not, indeed, perhaps he should not, inquire into the religious commitment of his fellow workers, since the action itself does not differ materially from the action of those who are not believers. The norms of the material action involved are the norms of positive justice, equity, and humanity, which are accepted "even if in an indefinite way" by non-Christians as well.

The Christian can also engage in critical cooperation by which he seeks to introduce a better order. He does not become disloyal to the rules that govern a particular sphere of life. Hence he does not postulate the "best possible system," but he does seek to improve the rules governing a given area of life and he does attempt to introduce a better actual system. Again he works with those who have the same goal without asking about the motives of his cooperators beyond knowing that they share a common goal and that they can best achieve actual results by cooperating.

Finally, the Christian can engage in apostolic preparatory action. Here the intention is not so much to achieve outward success as to witness to the will of God. Cooperation is only possible with those whose lives are based on the same foundation of faith. In preparatory action, practicality is not the consideration; it is more a matter of preparing men to see God by showing how ungodly the present historical social order is. Brunner also implies that the really lasting significant changes in the social order result more from apostolic action than from cooperative action. The first two types of action seem closely related to the effective action discussed in an earlier chapter, whereas apostolic action is more closely akin to demonstrative action. As I have already hinted in another connection, the demonstrative action is finally of more value in Brunner's view than the effective, and, despite all his protests to the contrary, the indirect results of such demonstrative action seem really more ethically important to him than the more directly produced results of effective action (DI, 272-79).

The ultimate superiority of apostolic preparatory action does not only mean that the rational knowledge of the unbeliever is inferior in lacking the deep Christian understanding of love; it also means that the unbeliever's action is less effective in the long run even on the level of purely external action. The implication is that a society pervaded by Christian values is the ideal society, and that only a Christian civilization can be a genuinely "good" civilization. I will now turn directly to the question of a Christian civilization in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV

CHRISTIANITY AND CIVILIZATION

As we saw in the last chapter, there is considerable ambivalence in Brunner's writings concerning the competency of natural human reason to know ethical truth without the benefit of revelation. Clearly it is in the realm of social ethics that reason is best equipped to perceive the external demand of the will of God, but even there Brunner seems uncertain about the extent to which religious knowledge may be necessary for genuine moral knowledge. Indeed it seems possible to discern in his writings tendencies toward two distinct ways of handling the whole question of social ethics, involving different understandings of the relative role of Christian revelation and natural reason and based on different assessments of the social situation. The two approaches exist side by side, and Brunner does not even seem to notice the difference, let alone contemplate the possibility of their being contradictory with each other.

The first approach, which we have already observed in broad outlines, I shall call the "ethic of the orders." God has given man societal orders by which human life is organized, and the task of man is to use his reason to determine what will best fulfill the requirements of those orders.

Underlying many of Brunner's statements regarding the ethic of the orders, though certainly not all of them, is a pessimistic, negative attitude toward the orders, based on the assumption that the only or primary function of the orders is the negative one of restraining the forces of anarchy which threaten to engulf human life. The orders are to be maintained in their existing form as a check on human sin. There are, to be sure, some important passages in which Brunner seems aware that man, even natural man, is capable of more than that, that even the natural man can perceive the requirements of justice and can yearn for a better social order and work toward it. At any rate, the feature of the ethic of the orders which is of importance for the present discussion is the accessibility of the ethic to the natural reason. It is not distinctively Christian in content, though only the Christian can comprehend the ground of the obligation, namely, the will of God.

The other approach can be characterized as an "ethic of Christian civilization." According to this account, Western civilization has depended for the strength of its social fiber on the Christian values which have permeated that civilization. In this theory, it is not the rational nature of man which provides the guide lines for the ordering of human life, but the values of the Christian civilization. In so far as the non-Christian is aware of the proper values for societal organization, he possesses this knowledge by virtue of his unconscious absorption of

Christian values. There is also a pessimism in this approach to the problem of social ethics, since Brunner feels that Western civilization has been becoming progressively secularized, and hence it has been losing that foundation which has given it stability and enabled it to maintain a relatively effective balance between individual freedom and collectivism.

It should be readily apparent that the two approaches have radically different views of the world in which social action takes place. The first assumes the model of the Christian living in a secular world, where his external obligations are to be discovered in cooperation with non-Christians by perceiving the requirements of the orders of creation, while as a Christian he also attempts to find a way of loving within the loveless orders. The other approach implies that the Christian is living in what is or has been a Christian world, and his duty is to keep it that way.

It should be equally clear that a different understanding of the relationship of religion and morality is presupposed by the two approaches. In the ethic of the orders, morality is linked to religion indirectly in that the orders by which life is governed are God's orders; but the knowledge of these orders is a rational matter, so that the orders can function even where God is not known at all. But in the case of the ethics of Christian civilization, the values are distinctively Christian values, and the influence which these values have on non-Christians depends entirely on the influence of Christians in shaping the values of their civilization.

Neither of the approaches gives an adequate account of natural morality. The ethics of the orders does offer the possibility of explaining how the unbeliever can know the external requirements of God's will, even to the point of perceiving the necessity and the direction for changes in the social order. But such knowledge is merely external, and hence it does not touch the heart of true morality, the internal nature of the man himself. On the whole Brunner's statements in his ethic of the orders acknowledging the moral insight and good will of the unbeliever are overshadowed by his pessimistic view of the orders as a restraint on sin and by his emphasis on the distortion of the natural reason by sin, both of which serve to limit severely the possibility of genuine moral knowledge on the part of the non-Christian. The ethic of Christian civilization, on the other hand, offers the possibility for the unbeliever to absorb and internalize Christian values, even to the point of attaining a disposition somewhat similar to Christian love. But it is not as natural man that he attains this moral position; his "natural morality" is only the reflected image of the Christian morality in the civilization around him. Thus in neither case does Brunner exhibit a real respect for the possibility of a genuinely natural morality which by itself possesses a relatively high degree of genuine moral knowledge, and this in spite of the fact that he himself acknowledges that there have been civilizations of relatively high moral and cultural achievement where Christianity could not have been a factor, for example, ancient Greece (CC, I, 8-10).

The ethics of the orders was dominant in Brunner's early writing, especially The Divine Imperative, though even there we can find elements which seem characteristic of the other approach. By the time he wrote Justice and the Social Order, Brunner had moved much closer to the Christian civilization approach, producing in that volume a curious mixture of the two attitudes. In his Gifford Lectures, the Christian civilization theme became dominant, to the virtual exclusion of the earlier ethic of the orders. In this chapter, I will deal with Brunner's ethic of Christian civilization.

Christian Values and the Social Order

We must begin our examination by asking what Brunner means by a "Christian civilization." There are two levels on which that question must be considered. First is the historical, descriptive level. Brunner implies that certain values of Christian faith have permeated Western society and have produced certain cultural forms and cultural values which characterize Western civilization and give it its distinctiveness. On this level, the theory of Christian civilization answers the question "What *is* Christian civilization?" But on the second level, Brunner considers the Christian response to certain cultural issues, showing what a Christian civilization would be if Christian faith were taken as the basis for dealing with cultural problems. The two senses of Christian civilization are not, of course, absolutely distinct or mutually exclusive, but they represent different emphases in Brunner's writings.

It is the first of these senses that is more important in Brunner's ethical writings, and it is this sense of Christian civilization with which I am primarily concerned in this examination. The idea involves what Frankena calls genetic or causal dependence of morality upon religion. He suggests that it might be argued that morality grew out of religious soil, or that a particular moral system arose from a particular religious tradition, as it is sometimes argued that democratic morality is an outgrowth of the Christian religion.[1]

Brunner seems convinced that, in the history of man, it was religion that originally gave rise to morality. He begins with the exaggerated statement that "as a fact of history, morality...never appears apart from religion" (DI, 29). He continues,

> From the empirical and historical point of view religion is the source of all "good breeding" and of all morality. The consciousness of "right and wrong," of that which is permitted and that which is not permitted, commanded and forbidden, is very closely connected with the consciousness of "the Holy." (DI, 29)

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[1] Frankena, Harvard Educational Review, XXXI, 421.

On the basis of available evidence, Brunner is convinced that religion and morality were indissolubly united in the primitive stage of human history. But it is also clear that the moral consciousness acquires independence of the religious consciousness in the course of history (DI, 30). Thus the history of mankind "shows a widespread independence, both of morality from religion, as well as of religion from morality" (D, I, 180). Thus from the historical point of view there is no necessary positive correlation of the moral and the religious.

However, Brunner has nothing at stake in the general theory of the genetic or historical connection of morality and religion. His interest is in the connection of Christian values and Western civilization. His suggestion seems to be that there are certain themes of the New Testament faith which lead to social consequences, often unexpected consequences, when they are put into practice in Christian life, despite the fact that the New Testament itself has almost no concern with civilization or culture. The idea is reminiscent of the thought of Max Weber and Ernst Troeltsch; indeed, Brunner expresses his appreciation for Weber's Sociology of Religion, although he is critical of the Weber thesis about the relation of Calvinism and capitalism, partly, I venture to say, because he did not fully understand Weber (DI, 572; CC, II, 99-100). At any rate, something like the principle of latency which Troeltsch especially developed in his study of Christian social ethics seems to be at work in Brunner's theory of Christian civilization.[1] The New Testament message, especially in its understanding of the nature and destiny of man, provides a powerful impetus to Christian action which has had deep and far-reaching effects in the formation of Occidental culture.

Brunner thinks that the Christian understanding of the equal dignity of all men, based on man's creation in the image of God, is the basis of the Western conception of justice. The development of modern law, the conception of the dignity of women and the value of children, and the idea of the equality of human rights in general are examples which Brunner mentions to indicate the influence of Christian faith and Christian doctrine in the development of the civilization of the West (JSO, 36, 39; DI, 520; D, III, 243-44). The Christian view of the sovereignty of God has imbued Western man with the sense that the state is not omnipotent, and has thereby checked the tendency toward totalitarianism (CC, I, 157; CC, II, 117; JSO, 75). Indeed, the influence of the Christian religion on cultural development has been manifold.

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[1] Whether Brunner was influenced by Troeltsch's concept of latency is perhaps impossible to determine. It would be interesting to know the extent to which Troeltsch's thinking has influenced Brunner's ethic. Although the theological predispositions of the two men are quite divergent, there are interesting similarities in their thought. Brunner admits freely that Troeltsch shaped his view on natural law (DI, 594). Moreover, the kind of inner-outer duality which runs through the whole Lutheran tradition and through the influence of Kant pervades the tradition of German idealism is also evident in both Troeltsch and Brunner. Troeltsch struggled with the dichotomy of his Gesinnungsethik and his Objectivethik, and seems to have come down finally on the side of the Objectivethik; Brunner faced the same problem, but he seems to have placed greater weight finally on the Gesinnungsethik. See Ernst Troeltsch, "Grundprobleme der Ethik," Gesammelte Schriften, Vol. II (Tübigen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1913), especially pp. 623-65, and Christian Thought: Its History and Application, ed. Baron F. von Hügel (London: University of London Press, 1923), especially pp. 39-99 and 133-67.

> Our democratic state-forms, also our public and private charitable institutions, the colleges of English and American universities, a multitude of the most important concepts of our psychological, philosophical, juridical and cultural language are directly or indirectly products of Christian tradition and of Christian thinking, feeling and purposing. (CC, I, 5)

Brunner refers to the values and principles which are often embodied in various "free forms of community" as rooted in Christian faith, even though those whose actions are guided by such values and principles may have no conscious connection with the Christian faith at all. Brunner describes this phenomenon as an "unconscious Christianity" and an "unconscious Church," or a "secular" or "profane" church. He observes that much that is known and willed by Christians is also known and willed by those who do not confess the name of Christ, and who are even unaware that "what they affirm and will proceeds from the message of the Gospel." He insists that the "influence of the Gospel extends where the Gospel itself is not believed," or to put it another way, "the Christian ethos is effective even among those who are not Christians" (DI, 520-21; MR, 459).

Brunner's analysis is by no means as subtle and sophisticated as that of either Weber or Troeltsch, nor does Brunner provide their kind of careful historical and sociological documentation for his assertions; indeed, he offers little evidence to prove that it is Christian values which have made Western civilization what it is. Nor does he offer any explanation of the means by which these Christian values work their way into the social order. There is undoubtedly a measure of truth in Brunner's theory, but he does little to establish it; rather, for the most part, he merely assumes what many historians and sociologists would seriously question.

Brunner seems to overestimate the contribution of Christianity to Western civilization, giving too little credit to other forces which also made a positive contribution to the development of the culture of the West, especially the Renaissance and the Enlightenment. He seems to have oversimplified the process of social causation. No single cause theory is likely to be adequate to explain something so complex as the development of social organization. Brunner is aware of the plurality of forces that have contributed to Western civilization (DI, 269; CC, I, 8-12). But in spite of this recognition, he seems to credit Christianity with too much influence in the shaping of Western culture, underestimating the significance of the other factors.

Brunner does acknowledge that high levels of civilization can exist and achieve relative stability and justice without Christian faith, for example, the ancient Greek civilization. He further recognizes that some of the values of Christianity can at least be approximated on some basis other than Christian faith, for example the doctrine of the equal dignity and equal rights of men propounded by the Stoics. Nevertheless, he does not seem to draw the conclusion that a viable civilization is possible apart from Christian faith, and he does not modify his position that the only hope for the West is a revival of Christianity.

Brunner's estimate of the importance of the Christian contribution to Western civilization is most clearly evident in his predictions concerning the "inevitable" course of the social order in the absence of Christian values. On the basis of his rather dubious assertion that Christianity alone can provide assurance of a middle way between collectivism and individualism, Brunner concludes that only a strong Christian tradition can prevent the West from losing this balance and falling into totalitarianism; and he warns that the societies in the West, though they have not yet grasped this fact, will inevitably succumb if the process of de-Christianization continues (JSO, 45; CC, I, 101). Brunner seems to have overlooked the fact that the three historical examples of totalitarianism which he cites were societies in which Christianity seemed strongest--Germany, Italy, and Russia. By contrast some of the countries which seem to be most immune to the totalitarian threat are those in which the process of de-Christianization has progressed the farthest, for example, the Scandinavian countries.

Brunner seems equally doctrinaire in his assertion that humanism depends upon the religious tradition. Ancient humanism grew out of ancient religion, he asserts, and modern idealistic humanism grew out of the Christian tradition (CC, I, 87). He further maintains that humanism can only survive so long as there is a Christian tradition on which it can feed. He does not provide adequate evidence to show that humanism did in fact grow out of the Christian tradition, but even if he had done that he would still not have proved that humanism can grow only on religious soil or that it cannot outlive its parent.

Unlike Weber, Brunner does not acknowledge the possibility that the values formed under the influence of the Christian religion can survive the demise of religion. He insists that Western civilization not only grew out of the Christian tradition, but also depends upon Christian faith for its continued existence. The crisis of the West is at its root a religious crisis (CC, I, 4). All the evils of modern society, many of which Brunner thinks are related to the technical revolution, are finally a consequence of the secularization of life. The progressive decline of Christian influence has caused a progressive decay of civilization. The values of a Christian civilization derive from Christian faith and will die with it, or soon afterward (CC, II, 11-13, 132).

It can be argued, I think, that Brunner demonstrates the necessity of religion for a viable civilization through a definitional fiat. To put the matter crassly, Brunner's argument seems to involve the assumption that whatever is good in Western civilization depends upon Christian values, whether men realize it or not, and whatever is bad is the result of secularism, by which he means the rejection not only of institutional religion but also of those values which derive from religious faith. Genuine secularism is evil by definition. This position means that a secularism which arrives at some of the same conclusions about civilization as Christian faith is not really secularism, but "unconscious Christianity."

If this theory of "unconscious Christianity" were only a theological ploy to account for the existence of moral truth apart from organized Christianity, thereby allowing for the possibility of some awareness of these values entirely apart from the influence of organized religion, there could be no historical or sociological objection to it. But Brunner's point is not merely a theological interpretation explaining the existence of natural moral knowledge; he intends it as a factual, historical assertion as well. Whenever "secular" values correspond to Christian values, the secular value has been derived from Christianity and is unconsciously dependent on it, not merely in the sense that it derives from the Christian God, but in the sense that it results from the influence of the Christian religion. This kind of historical assertion would require considerable historical proof, which Brunner does not even begin to provide. But as a theological doctrine, the concept of "unconscious" or "anonymous" Christianity has much to commend it.

Because Brunner assumes that any good in secularism is secretly dependent on Christianity, it is not surprising that he cannot see any value in secularism per se. By polarizing the issue as he has done, he cannot acknowledge the possibility of any favorable evaluation of secularization. If he conceived of secularism as "de-churchifying" the social order, a concept which would encourage an increased openness to the work of God beyond institutional religious structures, the whole tone of his ethic would change. But because he refuses to acknowledge that any system which possesses an element corresponding to Christian truth could have acquired its knowledge without the historical influence of Christian faith, Brunner is blinded to the positive contributions which secularism has made to modern society. He cannot see, for example, that the pluralistic social organization which he espouses under the name of federalism is at least as much a result of the social pluralism of a secular age as it is the result of Christian values, and that this pluralism protects society as much from the authoritarian domination of society by the church as it does from the tyranny of a totalitarian state. To assert that religious values can give rise to certain social values and forms is one thing, which, though probably true at least in part, still requires more evidence than Brunner provides. But it is quite another matter to assert that the values necessary for a stable society can only be derived from Christian faith. Even to prove that Christianity was the historical cause of the social development of Western civilization would not prove that it was the necessary condition of its development; even less would it prove that it remains a necessary condition for the survival of Western culture.

Passing from the historical problem, let us ask how the notion of Christian civilization can be utilized in the development of a social ethic. If there are in Christian faith certain latent tendencies, certain religious values which indirectly push in the direction of the formation of particular societal values and structures, one possible technique of social ethics would be to ferret out the relevant values and make them directly the norms of the social order. Since the ethic of the orders as I have defined it is _directly_ concerned with how one must act externally in relation to the existing orders, adopting the latent or covert values which create Christian civilization as the overt basis for a program of social action (that is, as guides for adapting and reforming the existing orders in accordance with Christian values) could provide a bridge between the two kinds of ethics at that point where both are concerned with Christian social action.

Brunner's discussions of the norms for the reform of existing orders often involve values which are similar to the values of a Christian civilization, even though Brunner does not call them by that name in his ethics of the orders. One example of this similarity is his call for reform of the economic order such that the worker is considered a co-worker with the manager and is given a voice in the formation of company policy. This principle for reform involves the Christian view of the personal dignity of man and a sense that the economic order should strive toward genuine community. But these values are really none other than the values of Christian civilization. Another example of the way in which the values of Christian civilization can be norms for reform of the social order concerns the principles of justice which Brunner develops in Justice and the Social Order. These principles rest indirectly on a Christian view of man and hence on the values of a Christian civilization, yet they are intended to provide guidance for the reform of the structures of society to make them more responsive to the demands of justice.

Likewise, there are hints in the writings that are dominated by the Christian civilization theme that the values of the Christian civilization can at least pass judgment on certain social structures, even if Brunner does not there draw conclusions about what external changes in the structure of the society ought to be undertaken. For example, Brunner contends that totalitarian society is clearly condemned as being contrary to the basic values of Christian civilization; however, Brunner does not offer a social program for preventing or eliminating totalitarianism (CC, I, 158; CC, II, 96-98).

On one occasion Brunner explicitly acknowledges the possibility of finding social relevance in the very structure of the Christian community. He speaks of the analogy which the free churches of America and England discovered between the Christian community and the civic community. He implies that the democratic government of the free churches, based on the principle of the recognition of the equal dignity of every man, provided one of the essential factors in the development of the democratic form of national government. This principle of ecclesiastical organization not only influenced the system of political democracy, reflected for example in the Constitution of the United States, but even contributed to the introduction of democratic ideas into business and to the struggle for equal rights and social privileges for women (D, III, 320).[1]

The use of the values implicitly contained in Christian faith as norms for judging and altering the social orders is not, however, the dominant theme of the ethic of Christian civilization. Indeed, it hardly seems an exaggeration to say that the more important the idea of Christian civilization becomes in Brunner's writings, the less he seems to advocate overt social action aimed at altering the structure of society. His reasoning seems to be that if the Christian civilization was historically formed by the silent revolution in men's values resulting from the transformation of their hearts by Christ, the way to bring about changes in the structure of society today is to work to change the values of the men of that society. Brunner's ethic of Christian civilization is essentially an ethic of indirection.

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[1] It is interesting to observe the development of Brunner's thought regarding this kind of analogical reasoning in social ethics. In the second volume of his systematic theology, Brunner refers derisively to Karl Barth's use of the concept of analogy in one of his early articles (D, II, 319). He objects that one can prove anything by analogy. However, in the third volume of the dogmatics, he speaks approvingly of such analogical thinking and implies that he has been using the concept all along in his ethical writings (D, III, 320). Brunner undoubtedly thinks that there are legitimate and illegitimate uses of the notion of analogy. But if this is so, then his sweeping denunciation of the concept in the earlier statement is unwarranted.

In describing the indirect effects of Christian values, Brunner distinguishes between the center and the periphery of life, by which he means to distinguish between the internal values of men and their relation to one another and to God on the one hand and the external structure of society on the other. He argues that New Testament faith is radically revolutionary at the core, but that it is not at all revolutionary at the periphery. The radical revolution within the invisible center creates a "silent revolution" in the visible periphery. The only genuine and lasting changes are those which begin by changing men's hearts. Brunner asserts that the changes which begin "from without" do not effect real changes. "Outward revolutions are therefore at bottom fictitious, much ado about nothing" (CC, II, 38-41).

Brunner concludes his Gifford Lectures by arguing that Christianity is essentially "otherworldly," in the sense that it knows that no progress on the level of human culture can reach the goal of history beyond history. But this otherworldliness, with its concern for the transformation of men in the light of eternal values, is the strongest force for cultural renewal and preservation. Brunner maintains that the contribution of Christianity to civilization is a "by-product" of real Christian faith (CC, II, 141). He does not entirely exclude the possibility of drastic action intended to change outward conditions and social structures, but he warns that for the Christian it must never take first place and it must never be attempted before the situation is ripe for it, that is, before men's values have been prepared for the change. Thus he concludes that social changes which result from Christian motives "are more of an organic than of a violent nature." The change in the periphery which results from the new life at the center takes on the character of slow growth. The "drastic action" of which he speaks in this connection seems to consist in toppling an old structure and replacing it with a new one after the foundation of the old structure has been replaced by a new foundation (CC, II, 40).

Brunner's position is not, of course, entirely mistaken. But he does fail to comprehend the full significance of the mutual influence of personal and social values on the one hand and social structures on the other. He errs in saying that it is "always man who makes the conditions and not the conditions that make men" (CC, II, 39). Men are not only the creators but also the products of their social structures, a truth which, since Marx, no one should overlook. Brunner pays tribute to Weber for maintaining a healthy balance between the material and the ideal or "spiritual" factors in the formation of the values of men and civilizations, but he does not maintain this emphasis in the course of his treatment of the ethic of Christian civilization (CC, I, 11, 159). But if it is true that our social values are influenced by the social structure, then it is possible that some changes in social organization may be necessary before men's values can change, or at least that such social changes may be conducive to changes in the values of individual men.

But entirely apart from his failure to comprehend fully the logic of the connection of values and social structure, Brunner fails in his ethic of Christian civilization to offer a pragmatically satisfactory technique for effecting social change. As some of his statements in his treatment of the ethic of the orders reveal, Brunner knows that we cannot afford to postpone the solution of social problems until men are transformed in their hearts and are thereby moved to alleviate suffering and injustice. Yet the inferences which Brunner draws from his theory of Christian civilization contradict his better insights. In so far as his ethic of Christian civilization is concerned, Charles West's criticism that Brunner relies too much on changes in individual attitudes to effect changes in the social order is quite justified.

> But his whole picture of ideal social conditions circumscribes human freedom by leaving out very real questions of the operation of interest and power in society....The real problems of society are always falling outside of Brunner's conceptual analysis, a fact of which the question of how political and economic power is in fact to be dealt with, is a prime example. Brunner tends to see Christian responsibility in the West as exercised largely through individuals on individuals, despite what he says about community and about individualism. He emphasizes the changing of human spirits and attitudes as the key to social change, thereby bypassing the whole power problem. In short we have here a typical example of conservative idealism, peculiarly open to all the Marxist charges about the failure of such a point of view to come to grips with realities in a so largely socially determined world.[1]

As an over-all evaluation of Brunner's position, West's case is perhaps overstated, for there are certainly many passages in which Brunner allows for the direct reform of institutions and occasionally even urges rather thoroughgoing changes in the structure of society. He says that the Christian's knowledge that God's kingdom is not of this world does not mean that the kingdom "has no relation to man's responsibility for the social order." Rather, he argues, the more a man is "filled with hope for the Kingdom of God, the more he feels responsible and becomes active in bringing about a just and human social order" (CNSO, 9-10). However, in so far as we are concerned with the major thrust of that aspect of Brunner's thought that I have called the ethic of Christian civilization, West's assessment is basically sound. His criticism is certainly warranted by a passage like the following one:

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[1] Charles Converse West, "Recent Theological Encounters with Communism" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Dept. of Religion, Yale University, 1955), p. 45.

> One thing must, however, be continually emphasized, even if it sounds old fashioned: motive is more decisive than structure. Right systems will always result from the right motive, which means from love; but the right motive, the right disposition, never results from the right system. The primary function of the Church is not to change structures, that is, legal and organized systems, but to change the intention by the vital union of individuals and the community with the living and present Lord Jesus. (CCC, 43)

This kind of individual persuasion may be essential for achieving a perfect society, but the position endorsed in the passage just quoted ignores the conviction which Brunner himself urges elsewhere that in this world there will be no perfect society. Consequently, as long as men are sinful and human institutions are imperfect, the ethically sensitive man must be forever concerned that the institutions of society be continually readjusted to approach as nearly as possible the goal of equal justice for all, which means constant attention to the "legal and organized systems" in which men must live.

It is not really surprising, however, that Brunner's ethic of Christian civilization should conclude on an individualistic note, since his preoccupation with personalism predisposes his whole ethic to neglect the importance of social action. In the ethic of the orders, as we have seen, the personalism results in the depreciation of the value of external action by underestimating the urgency of changes in the orders. Brunner almost seems to sanction the attitude that we should not worry too much about changing the orders, but that we should do what the existing orders require and devote our primary energies to looking for ways of showing love and finding personal relations "between the lines" of the orders. In the ethic of Christian civilization, the emphasis on personalism as the essence of the Christian understanding of man and hence the basic value of Christian civilization becomes the ground for the inference that effective changes in society must await the conversion of men to the personalistic understanding of human nature. External social action is again depreciated because "real" social change can only be achieved by indirect means.

> All direct civil action is short-lived and changes nothing under the surface; the really shattering changes of the social structure take place as changes in the system of values, which, for its part, depends on faith and unbelief. (DI, 274)

We must not ignore the fact that Brunner does insist upon the necessity for action in society, though he is less interested in direct social action in his ethics of Christian civilization than in his ethic of the orders. But even when he does affirm that the Christian must act in society, this external action is always secondary and inferior.

The Church and the Social Order

If Brunner never really resolves the antithethical tendencies of the inward and outward dimensions of the moral life of the Christian, neither does he avoid a similar ambiguity with regard to the task of the church in the realm of ethics. On the one hand he can insist that the essential and distinctive task which is unique to the church is the proclamation of the gospel, the preaching of the word (DI, 437, 555; CNSO, 20). It is the conversion of men, with the resulting transformation of their values, that constitutes the primary social task of the church. Brunner distinguishes between the action appropriate for the Christian and the action appropriate for the church, implying that the Christian as a citizen may have obligations for more direct action than the church as an organization has (DI, 438). But this does not mean that the church has no interest in concrete social questions. Brunner insists that the church is well within its realm of competency in unconditionally demanding social justice and in engaging in the battle against totalitarianism (CCC, 15-16). Although it is not the primary task of the church to influence public opinion, one of its duties is to use the instruments of opinion formation to create public opinion which will enable Christ to exercise his sovereignty even over those who do not know him (DI, 521). The church ought to instruct the world on the subject of the secular orders, and it should on occasion adopt a "public attitude toward the great questions of the day in the secular realm" (DI, 559). Social manifestos and proclamations are necessary at the right time and place. The error of the papal encyclicals is not their concern with social issues, but their "falsely legal authoritative form." The church, then, must be a "watchman," exercising her prophetic office not only by expounding the "gospel," but also the "law," and in some circumstances the individual minister may even need to demand particular concrete decisions (DI, 559; CCC, 17).

But the limit of the proper role of the church is reached at the point of involvement in actual social politics (DI, 560, 438). The formation of Christian political parties and the adoption of political and economic programs involves the ethical error of ignoring the differentiation of the several orders of creation by confusing the spheres of the church and the state; and it involves a religious error in identifying the cause of Christ and the Kingdom of God with limited human objectives, whereas the Christian should know that the ultimate identification of our cause with the Lord's cause is absolutely forbidden (DI, 432; CCC, 42). The Christian civilization is guided by Christian values, but this means that the values of the state must be formed by Christian values, not that the church must become a party to policy formation. Brunner seems to imply that it is only rarely that a spokesman for the church should demand a particular action. The exercise of the prophetic office of the church seems to require more the awakening of a social conscience than the proposal of particular action.

The cause of prophetic criticism is best served, Brunner feels, when the church proclaims the "absolute ideal," unconcerned about whether it is at present "practicable." By this statement Brunner means that the church must "show the appalling contrast" between the actual order and an order filled with the spirit of Christ, without concerning herself with economic and political possibilities (DI, 438-39). On one occasion, Brunner distinguishes between absolute and relative justice, which is his terminology corresponding to Troeltsch's absolute and relative natural law. It would be an "outrage on life," Brunner says, to attempt to implement absolute justice because it is historically impossible. But the best possible system can only be created where the truly just, the absolutely just, continues to serve as an ideal goal (JSO, 100-2). What he apparently means by "awakening the conscience" is the judgment of existing orders on the basis of the standards of absolute justice; that is, the church is to demonstrate how far existing social conditions fall short of the absolute will of God by proclaiming unconditionally the pure demand of absolute justice.[1]

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[1] In his treatment of absolute and relative justice, Brunner defines relative justice as the best possible adaptation of the absolute demands of justice to a given situation. The word "adaptation" expresses the heart of Brunner's understanding of the realism of relative justice. His choice of "compromise" in the same passage, however, is

On the whole, the function of the church in Brunner's thought is much more indirect than some of his statements imply. The immediate, primary task of the church is not to create, change, or improve the social order, but to preach the message of redemption and eternal life (CNSO, 7). The primary mission of the church with reference to the social order is "educational and missionary," namely, instruction concerning the nature of community (DI, 429-30). Indeed, in the end it seems that the primary contribution of the church to the social order does not consist in a prophetic word addressed to society at large, but comes through its influence on individual Christians who, in turn, influence society. The primary responsibility for "penetrating the varied activities of the world" rests with individual Christians (DI, 535). The church best contributes to the creation of better laws and better social organization by equipping its members with the values and the sense of responsibility that enable them to cooperate in the search for a better order (CCC, 43-44).

But the greatest contribution of the church in achieving that goal is the witness that issues from the lives of

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ill-advised. His statement that "every positive system of justice is a compromise between the truly just and what is possible" is not precisely correct, since compromise involves some give and take on both sides; it should be clear that the resolution of which he speaks does not involve a compromise lying somewhere between what is truly just and what is possible, since this would be to demand more than what is possible (JSO, 101). What Brunner means is the adaptation of the ideal to what is possible in a given situation.

Christian believers. Here the social value of what Brunner calls "demonstrative action" is apparent. The embodiment of the message of the church in a true community of believers and its manifestation in the spirit of love which believers exhibit can have tremendous effects, because of its witness and example, in shaping the values of the members of the social community (CCC, 17). With specific reference to the economic order, Brunner says that this kind of witness is the strongest missionary force and the most powerful force for economic transformation that the church can generate.

> The word of the Church will have little effect if the community of believers does not show a new life even in economic matters, a life by which the world is judged, and at the same time shaken out of its hopelessness. By the action of her members she must show that the Gospel is not only the power of eternal redemption but also a force for earthly righteousness and humane conduct. (DI, 439)

Even the prophetic office of the church should be interpreted more in terms of the internal life of the church than as social criticism. Brunner thinks that in contemporary usage the "prophetic word" has been understood too much in the sense of guidance for social and ethical action. He insists that the prophetic element is first of all the element of self-criticism by which the church attempts to purify itself, which would have the indirect result of enabling Christians to be more faithful in setting an example which rebukes society (D, III, 119-21).

Brunner has good reason for arguing that the church should not become a political body contending for political power; even if the church were able to reach the necessary consensus that would enable it to become effective as a direct political force, it should still avoid becoming so embroiled in party politics that it loses its effectiveness as a prophetic voice. But this need not mean that the church should not form opinions on specific issues, for example, supporting particular legislative proposals on important social issues. Brunner weakens his original statement of the role of the church, however, when he makes this more direct action a secondary aspect of the church's mission reserved for exceptional cases.

It is to Brunner's credit that he avoids specifying exactly how the church ought to act, since this judgment depends upon the assessment of a particular set of historical circumstances. So far as his general treatment of ethical problems is concerned, there is a certain virtue in seeking generality without reference to specific issues, since it gives a discipline to ethical thinking that is often lacking in contextualism. Of course, it is likewise desirable that the general ethical treatise be supplemented by more concrete treatments of specific problems, since a systematic theological ethic concerned with general principles is much less "sensitive" than a contextualist ethic. What is true of ethics is also true of the church's social role. The church's long range contribution to society is crippled if its proclamations do not involve careful enunciation of basic principles and values. But the church does not fulfill its social responsibility merely by publishing general statements. There are also occasions when the church should indicate the application of its basic principles by taking a definite stand on particular proposals, and in the end Brunner seems to take this responsibility too lightly.

Brunner is subject to criticism for making the social order too indirectly a concern for the church and for seeing the church's primary contribution to society as the informal shaping of personality and ethos. Considered on the whole, his position seems to claim too little for the church by conceiving of its essential function too narrowly, and on the other hand he seems to claim too much influence for the church in society by overestimating the force of its "indirect" influence.

But Brunner may appear to be guilty of another fatal error. It may seem that Brunner is saying that the church in its proper function is at times to be characterized by the kind of Utopian absolutism that he castigates in others. However, when Brunner claims that the primary social task of the church is to hold up the "absolute ideal," he does not think that this ideal ought to be construed as a program for social action in the manner of Utopian thought. Even so one might still wonder whether presenting the absolute ideal might not have some of the same effects of discouraging men from the difficult art of compromise that espousing a Utopian program would have, unless it is accompanied by some instruction about how this ideal can be accommodated to the less than ideal historical situation, and this would seem to require at least occasional indications of what concrete proposals for a particular situation most nearly accord with the ideal.

Closely related to the question of the role of the church in the formation of social policy is the question of the function of the Christian ethicist. The question is whether the ethicist speaks for the church to the world or addresses himself to the members of the church. Brunner does not deal with this problem in any direct way. It is not even clear for what audience Brunner wrote his ethical treatises. Since he seems to allow for at least occasional direct address of the church to society on principles of social ethics, presumably the Christian ethicist could be directly involved as spokesman for the church on such occasions. But Brunner probably sees the essential task of the Christian ethicist as the instruction of believers. In the first place, the church itself has the primary ethical task of "educating and inspiring local congregations." In other words, the church changes society primarily by strengthening the will of Christian people, who in turn seek to create "new and more righteous orders" (DI, 438, 521). Thus the ethicist, as the servant of the church, is probably limited by the same restrictions as the church itself. Secondly, Brunner conceives of the task of Christian ethical reflection as part of the larger task of theology;

and the theologian's task is directed inward toward the church, since it involves providing the critical tools by which the church continually purifies its doctrine. One would assume, then, that the ethical aspect of theology would be dedicated to the task of guiding the church and individual Christians in their reflection on moral issues. The primary function of ethics is the negative one of clearing away the difficulties which prevent us from understanding the moral message of Christianity (DI, 10). This position makes it sound very much as if the task of the Christian ethicist is to instruct Christians. Brunner probably feels that part of the task of the Christian ethicist is the instruction of Christian laymen who are specialists in various fields concerning basic Christian ethical principles, which will aid their attempts to deal as Christians with social problems that fall within their realm of competency (RR, 380-81, 394-95).

There is much to be said in favor of such a view of Christian ethics. It would certainly seem that in a pluralistic and secular society theological justifications for social policy are irrelevant in the broader social discussion. To decide social issues on the basis of theological doctrine would be to establish a system of heteronomy in which society would be placed under the domination of the church. But in so far as the Christian ethicist can appeal to the values of the society itself, without relying upon specifically religious authority, then I should think that he both can and should engage in the general discussion of social issues. On the whole, Brunner's emphasis seems to be against this broader conception of the task of Christian ethics.

This is especially so in that element of his thought that I have called the ethic of Christian civilization, since there Brunner shows no respect for genuinely secular values; and he finally limits the technique of social ethics to the indirect strategy of changing men's values by converting them to Christian faith. As a general estimate of the ethic of Christian civilization, I would suggest that the most damaging criticism may not be merely that Brunner is incorrect, but that he is irrelevant. Whether we like it or not, the present age is increasingly becoming a secular age. I am convinced that there are good as well as bad features in this trend. But good or bad, it is a fact. Therefore, any Christian ethic that does not come to grips with this new reality in a positive way is doomed to the ash heap of irrelevance.

Neither of Brunner's two "ideal types" of social ethic which I have described, with their different interpretations of the social situation and their different strategies of social action, really deals constructively with the phenomenon of secular culture. To demonstrate that the two types of ethics, the ethic of the orders and the ethic of Christian civilization, are both involved in Brunner's treatment of more concrete problem areas, I will devote the next chapter to a case study of one specific area of social concern, namely, Brunner's economic ethic.

CHAPTER V

BRUNNER'S ECONOMIC ETHIC

In this chapter I propose to illustrate some of the points made in the previous chapters by engaging in a more detailed examination of one area of Brunner's social ethical thought. The selection of his view of economics for such a case study is dictated by several factors. His economic thought employs both the idea of the orders of creation and the theme of the Christian civilization, and hence it demonstrates his appeal to the rational values of natural morality and also to more specifically Christian values. Moreover, the area of economics is one in which technical action, a subject that figured significantly in an earlier chapter, is a major consideration. It is also an aspect of his social thought which has been largely untouched in studies of his ethics, since his economic view is normally treated only as it relates to his political analysis. This omission is unfortunate, because it is in his economic position that Brunner's more progressive strains, often obscured in his preoccupation with sin and impersonality, are most clearly evident. Yet the economic ethic is not unrepresentative of Brunner's thought, and, as we shall see, even his more progressive economic views are finally qualified by some of the same reservations as are typical of other areas of his thought.

Brunner's early treatment of economic questions was almost entirely in the terms of the order of creation. I have argued that the orders of creation should be viewed as embodying particular social functions. Brunner's method of introducing the discussion of the economic order seems to confirm this understanding. His first step is not that of demonstrating the _prima facie_ obligation inherent in the existing orders, though he does come to that later; rather, he begins by demonstrating the necessity of an economic order _per se_. The argument is simple and obvious. Man has to work in order to live. Even if he does not live by his own labor, he at least depends for his livelihood on someone's labor. The Athenean aristocrat and the medieval noble did not do manual labor, but they depended upon the labor of slaves and serfs, respectively. In order to move beyond the most savage level, man must not only labor but must also plan his work. Moreover, except for an occasional instance of a kind of primitive individualism, men must work in cooperation with others. Hence an economic order is absolutely essential for civilized life (DI, 384-85).

Obviously even the natural man can perceive the necessity of work and can apply his "intelligent consideration" to the task of deciding where and how to go about it. The creation of the economic order, therefore, does not depend on any peculiarly religious knowledge. But, of course, the

Christian does interpret the foundation of the economic order differently than does the non-Christian. Where the believer sees only the human necessity for labor and the ordering of labor, the Christian perceives the hidden hand of God. In faith the Christian knows that he is destined to work in community; he knows that work is a divinely imposed duty (CC, II, 68). As Biblical evidence that work is a God-given commission, Brunner cites the commission to Adam to tend the garden and Paul's admonition to the Thessalonians that those who refused to work should not be permitted to eat. Man is commanded to create an economic order by a command given in creation itself; work does not merely result from man's sin (DI, 398; JSO, 148). Brunner argues that Christian doctrine dignifies work, in contrast to the depreciation of work in the Greek ideal, most clearly expressed by Aristotle, and carried over by the church into the Middle Ages. Apart from egoistic motives, Brunner asserts, only belief in God's creation affords a real motive for work (CC, II, 68). But even if the natural man intends to serve only his own interests by his cooperative labor with others, God has so made the world that, in serving himself, a man also serves his fellow man (DI, 389). Moreover, whereas reason sees merely the necessity of work and of an economic community involving cooperative effort, the Christian sees the natural community of labor as a preparation for true community; that is, God has so created the world that men must work together, thereby being drawn toward that fellowship which is the deepest meaning of human life.

The first thing to be said about the economic order is that it is one of the functional tasks of mankind which can be perceived naturally but can only be fully understood in terms of the will of the Creator. But deliberation concerning the proper form for the fulfillment of this function must at least begin with an examination of the historically given situation. Every individual is born into a particular economic order. Neither individuals nor generations begin life de novo with certain kinds of societal functions which they must carry out with social forms. Men are always placed in already existing social orders. Hence the question we face is not, "What kind of structure shall we establish to perform the necessary societal functions?" Instead we must ask, "How are we to act with regard to the structures in which we have been placed?"

The fact that we are born into an already existing economic order means that whatever we do regarding that area of life must at least take account of the given order, even if we set out to overthrow the existing order completely and replace it with a new one. But Brunner thinks that the existence of an order not only means that we must take it into account in our deliberation, as the facts of the situation, but also that we acknowledge that its very existence implies some degree of obligation to adapt ourselves to it. From the Christian perspective, the existence of the orders is testimony to the creative and preserving work of God; hence the existing orders embody some degree of divine sanction. This is not, of course, an unqualified endorsement of the particular economic order in which we are placed. Brunner clearly recognizes that any particular economic order will be less than ideal, or to put it more strongly, that all possible economic orders will be haunted by sin. There never has been and never will be any other than a sinful economic order. The orders are always perverted and under the curse of evil, and the fact that we must act in such wicked and unjust economic systems will mean that our actions also will be wicked and unjust (DI, 399-400, 416). But because he knows that a bad order is better than anarchy, the Christian perceives that the existing orders are used by God to maintain the order that is necessary for human existence.

What this means about the demand for reform is that the reform of an existing economic order must involve a realistic calculation of the possibility of effecting change. Brunner looks askance at all "visionary Utopian programmes" which attempt to deduce a priori what ought to be the order of the economy without any reference to what is given and what is possible. Economic reform cannot be accomplished by "dilettante visionaries" sitting quietly around a committee table, he says, but only by those who understand the issues and are deeply involved in them (DI, 426). The notion of an ideal order need not be entirely rejected, as long as it serves only as a guiding light and not as a program for action. The actual process of reform, however, must be a constant effort to adapt the desirable to the possible. Brunner is unquestionably a reformist, not a revolutionary. We should only attempt to introduce a new order, he thinks, when we have good reason to believe that the change can be accomplished "pauselessly," that is, without a break in continuity with the old order (DI, 230). Revolution is only rarely justifiable, but it does remain a last resort for a hopelessly evil order which cannot be reformed by other means (DI, 473-74; JSO, 93-94).

Brunner probably intends to be taken as an advocate of gradual reform. Yet his manner of discussing the replacement of the old order by the new seems to imply a polarization of the possibilities that militates against a step by step process whereby the old order is gradually improved. He often seems to say that the only alternatives are revolution and preservation of the *status quo*. Because he emphasizes the dichotomy between the new order and the old order so strongly, Brunner's own gradualist tendencies are often undermined; since gradual improvement sometimes seems not to be considered and the introduction of a whole new order seems impossible, Brunner is often left with the present order as the only viable alternative to anarchy.

To be sure, there are passages in which Brunner seems more forthrightly the exponent of gradualism. The notion of gradual change is particularly prominent in that strain of his thought that I have called his ethic of Christian civilization; but unfortunately his emphasis there is more descriptive than normative. He implies that the progressive spread of Christian influence and hence of Christian values does lead gradually to the restructuring of social institutions along lines compatible with Christian values. But he does not thereby make gradualism a policy; that is, he does not propose that we should directly concern ourselves with attempting actively to foster gradual change in the social structure on the basis of the values of the Christian civilization. Instead, he is content with the knowledge that such gradual change will occur if the underlying values are changed.

The issue here may appear to be only a dispute about words, since the alternatives are expressed as the creation of a new order or the improvement of an old one, but I submit that a significant difference in emphasis is involved, and that this difference in emphasis affects the way in which we view the likelihood of effective reform. If the model for change is the gradual reform of existing structures, reform may seem more feasible than if the change is expressed in terms of the introduction of a new order, even if the proposed changes in both cases are identical in substance.

But in suggesting that Brunner underplays the notion of gradual change, I do not wish to be understood as implying that he expresses neither a demand nor a hope for real change. Especially in his economic thought he manages to override the more static aspects of his view of the social order, so that he can urge significant economic reform. But even here, it must be admitted, Brunner devotes most of his energies to analyzing what is wrong with the economic order instead of considering how to change it, though he does have some fairly specific proposals for reforming capitalistic economic systems.

Brunner's Analysis of Capitalism and Communism

Brunner's analysis of existing economic orders begins with the presupposition that existing advanced economic systems can be described as either capitalistic or communistic. Capitalism and communism seem to function somewhat like ideal types for Brunner, but he sometimes implies that the ideal types describe fairly accurately existing economic systems of industrial nations. Earlier he focused most of his attention on the evils of capitalism, but he became increasingly disturbed by the "communist menace" and in the later part of his life he directed his criticism more strongly against communism.

Brunner does not engage in a careful analysis of particular national economies, but contents himself with sketching the outline of the aspects of his two types of economies that he considers relevant for his ethical analysis. Thus he does not attempt a precise definition of capitalism, for example, since the word can be used to describe a rather broad range of economic systems. Instead he selects a few salient features of classical *laissez faire* capitalism, which in his treatment functions as the ideal type of the capitalistic system. The capitalistic economic system is an industrial economy in which the means of production are owned privately. Modern capitalism is characterized by anonymous ownership, that is, the private ownership by many individuals of shares in an incorporated business. The moving force of the capitalist system is the profit motive. The system is "rationalized" in the Weberian sense, which for Brunner means that the controlling factor is rational calculation in the interest of the highest possible profits. Brunner argues, furthermore, that individualism is a defining characteristic of capitalism, since every capitalist is interested in his own profit.

Communism or socialism also presupposes an industrial economy and does not differ from capitalism essentially in the technical aspects of industrial production. The difference is that the means of production are publicly owned and are operated under government direction. Collectivism is a defining characteristic of this sytem. Brunner distinguishes between communism and socialism on the basis of the policies for achieving the system by revolutionary or by democratic means.

Technology and Secularism

Because both types of modern economies rest on a highly developed technological system, the first level of Brunner's critique of these systems which we shall examine concerns his view of technics. The use of technics in economic life is as old as man, for men have always used tools in order to work. Men were destined to use technical knowledge and technical skill to rise above nature and "subdue the earth." Technical action in itself is morally neutral; it receives its moral character from its life context and from the purposes for which it is undertaken (CC, II, 1-9). Labor, which is necessarily technical action, arises from man's natural needs; but because it involves the whole man and man in community and requires the choice of purposes and means, it is shot through with ethical questions. The economic order itself is ethically neutral on its technical side, that is, in so far as it deals with material goods and not with persons. But the motive force of every economic system is a system of values, so that no economic system is finally ethically neutral (DI, 398-99, 416). Thus Brunner concludes that, even though the technical guidance of the operation of the economy requires considerable expertise, the ethicist cannot leave the sphere merely to men with specialist knowledge of economic affairs. Indeed Brunner contends that any ethic which does ignore the economic problem is bankrupt. Although the organization of production and exchange on its purely technological side is the subject matter of technology and political economy, the whole process is so enmeshed in ethical considerations that cooperation between political economists and moralists is absolutely essential for a balanced view of the economic process (DI, 395-96). Brunner might have expressed the idea by saying that the task of the economist requires both expert technical knowledge of the functioning of economic systems and an ability to make economic decisions on the basis of a scheme of values. The economist's work involves choices which are moral choices, whether he recognizes them as such or not, so that the economist should be a morally sensitive man. It need not always be the case that the economist must "cooperate" with the ethicist, but only that the economist recognize that his task involves an ethical element as well as a technical element.

The technical revolution has rendered technics the most urgent of all problems of the present day, according to Brunner. What distinguishes the present era from all previous ages is the vast proportion to which modern technology has developed (CCC, 9). I must repeat that Brunner asserts that the problem is not technology itself, for technology in the abstract does not exist; the problem is with the men who use technology. Yet when Brunner describes the evils which have arisen from the rapid expansion of technology, he seems to contradict this observation. He speaks, for example, of the social disease which develops when men "abandon technics to itself" and permit it to become "autonomous." He deplores the evil that occurs when men "lose control" of their technics and allow the man-made machine to control their wills (CC, II, 9-13). Elsewhere he decries the tendency of men to become "slaves" to their industrial and economic order (DI, 391). Such remarks are misleading and imprecise because they seem to posit the independent existence of a technology which is able to act apart from the wills of the men who engage in technical action. Instead of locating some kind of autonomy or resistance to control in the technological system itself, Brunner should point to the rigidity of men in the technological "bureaucracy" who remain adamant to moral considerations. This kind of understanding is probably what Brunner has in mind when he uses the more misleading language. The notion of the "autonomous machine" which controls its maker is, of course, an effective rhetorical device, but it lacks the clarity and precision that we demand of ethical reflection.

What Brunner probably means by the autonomy of the machine is that this sphere of life is not always under moral control; he is not thereby really saying that it is not controlled by men, but merely that men no longer are guided by moral standards in their action in that sphere of life. Brunner speaks of the "autonomy of the industrial order" as lying not only in "its technological and natural limitations," but "far more in the ineradicable sinfulness of the human beings who engage in economic activity" (DI, 403). Brunner is thus aware that the evils of technology do not result from the "autonomy" of technology itself, but from the evil wills of men who use machines for sinister purposes. His pessimism is evident when he asserts that the use of technics in the service of political power aims is an almost inevitable necessity, almost implying with Lord Acton that power necessarily corrupts (CC, II, 10).

The evils which Brunner observes arising from the misuse of technics are manifold. The most disturbing, perhaps, is the close relation between the tool and the weapon. Almost every technical advance has its corresponding military development. Although there are exceptions, generally speaking increased ability for military destruction follows in the wake of technical progress. Brunner observes, for example, that the Roman roads were built for military purposes; the art of shipbuilding led to navies; and the invention of gunpowder in the West added to the destructiveness of warfare. The development of vast industrial systems made possible the modern war industry of the two world wars and has, with the development of the atomic bomb, created the capacity for annihilation without parallel in the previous history of technics (CC, II, 7, 11). Moreover, modern technics has made possible the totalitarian state, which can assert a control over its citizens unthinkable in the whole preceding history of tyranny. Indeed, Brunner even implies that a tendency toward totalitarianism is built into technical evolution, with its mechanization, its centralization, and its tendency to create "mass-men." Finally, the growth of huge and ugly cities inhabited by millions of impersonal "mass-men" is another sign of the social disease of the technological order of the present age (CC, II, 10, 13; CCC, 14-15).

Entirely apart from these evil consequences, Brunner is critical of modern economic technology for its depersonalization of the work situation. Brunner feels that the root of contemporary social disorder is to be located in the loss of a sense of personality exemplified in the impersonal techniques of modern mass production, which rob work of its meaning for the individual worker. Brunner uses the trite language of man's becoming "an insignificant cog" in a "huge impersonal machine" to describe the loss of the sense of personal vocation (DI, 391; CCC, 7). Brunner's personalism again lies at the foundation of his interpretation of the world. The idealization of the personalistic model means that the larger the scale of an operation and the more people that are involved, the more impersonal and abstract must be the social mechanisms and institutions of the system. Everything big is necessarily impersonal and hence imperfect, if not predominately evil. However, Brunner recognizes that we cannot turn back the clock to an earlier and more simple age. Now that our technological economy has developed, we cannot carry on economic life in any other way (DI, 425; CCC, 8-9). The large scale industry is our destiny, and we have now only to choose between "private capitalism" and "state capitalism," i.e., communism (JSO, 156).

In assessing the roots of the evils of the current economic order, Brunner concludes that it would be a mistake to say that modern technology is the dominant cause in the depersonalization of life which he finds so abhorrent. The cause-effect relationship is primarily the other way around. Technology has gained its prominence and has had its depersonalizing effects because the life of modern man had already become depersonalized. Technology and its effects result from men's designs and values.

> The whole modern technical development would have taken a different course had true personal life and true community meant more to men than the continual increase of material production at the expense of personality and community. But the most profound cause of this depersonalizing of man is the progressive secularizing of his thinking and willing, his estrangement from that faith in which the sovereign worth of personality and community is founded. (CCC, 9-10)

Brunner thus identifies the cause of the evils of a technological society as the absence of a generally accepted system of Christian values, i.e., the failure of men to create a truly Christian civilization (CC, II, 68). The undesirable features of industrial economy are more the result of secularization than of technics (CC, II, 13). It is the tragedy of modern history that the technical revolution occurred at a time when mankind was in a process of social dissolution and ethical confusion.

> It was the era of progressive secularisation and mass-atheism, when all ethical standards were relativised and men became metaphysically and ethically homeless.... We have already seen that modern technics could not have developed without a certain spirit of rationalism and secularisation. It is, however, equally true that secularised humanity was not socially and ethically equal to the technical revolution. Only a society which was incapable of subordinating the profit motive to higher motives, a society which was ethically, and even aesthetically callous and enfeebled, could allow the growth of those soulless, ugly, giant cities, with their speculative buildings and their proletarian quarters. Only such a society could watch without protest

> the dissolution of all natural community, and accept as inevitable the development of modern war technics. (CC, II, 11)

The secularization of life does not mean merely that secular man has given up faith in God and disavowed certain specifically Christian values. Brunner insists that the secularization involves the distortion of values. Man must always worship something, Brunner argues. He must have either God or an idol; it is Gott oder Abgott, to use the familiar German word-play (DI, 18). The problem with modern man is that he is obsessed with things. He has become materialistic. The man who is no longer bound to God becomes a slave to the world, Brunner asserts, and having become preoccupied with things, he loses the sense of community and the love of human beings (DI, 392).[1]

The theological interpretation that man's religious status is either that of a believer or an idolator may have merit as a theological account of the condition of man in relation to God, but it is of no value in helping us to understand what moves men to act as they do. It is simply not true that natural men are totally committed to only one value, certainly not to "material things." A man may hold many kinds of experience to be valuable, and it may be that there is no clear order of priority in his values; he may act at one time to maximize a particular value, and on other occasions in similar situations he may choose to strive for the fulfillment of a different value. Among these values we may often find even that desire for community and the love for human beings which Brunner reserves for believers. Brunner's description of the unbeliever in this context is much too dramatic to reflect real human experience. He has fallen far short of proving his case that it is the secularization of modern life that has created the evils which he perceives in the technological economic structure of industrial nations. It is not inconceivable that the same problems might have developed in a society pervaded by Christian values, i.e., in a Christian civilization, since, as Brunner admits, part of the problem even of Christian ethics is that of seeing the relevance of Christian values for the institutions of society. It is by no means certain that institutions responsive to the needs of people would necessarily grow up on the soil of good intentions, even in a "Christian civilization." Brunner's naive assumption that they would should certainly be questioned, since men of good will often disagree about what policies best serve the needs of the human community. Man's ignorance and finitude, and the individual and corporate sin that exists even in the Christian community, seem every bit as much a cause of whatever evils have developed in the technocratization of modern society as is secularization.

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[1] On the whole, Brunner implies that the loss of faith in God and the subsequent preoccupation with material things account for modern man's preoccupation with technology. But occasionally he suggests that the causal relation moves in the other direction. The stress on the importance of the production of material goods in a technological economy means that such a system tends to foster materialism, and Brunner even goes so far as to assert that for many people the new technical civilization leads to the feeling that a "Saviour God" is no longer needed, since man can now work out salvation for himself (CNSO, 16).

Not only must we not give Brunner his point that all the evils of contemporary society result from secularization; we must also object to his excessively negative estimate of the condition of the present social order. To be sure, societies supported by modern technological economies are plagued by serious problems, but Brunner dwells so much on these problems that he almost ignores accompanying virtues in modern technology. Nor does he entertain the thought that the evils of the technical civilization may be less heinous than those of a less advanced order. Brunner does not observe, for example, that it was the technical revolution that made possible such increased production that vast numbers could rise above the level of abject poverty, and that technical progress has made possible such national affluence in some countries that the poverty of any citizen in those countries is no longer an economic necessity. Moreover, according to some economists, it is this same economic affluence that has made possible the development of democratic social institutions in the West.[1] If this is true, then the democratic social institutions which Brunner prizes depend in part on the benefits of the technological society which he despises. Furthermore,

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[1] David M. Potter, People of Plenty: Economic Abundance and the American Character (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1954), pp. 111-127.

Brunner overreacts to the "dehumanization" of technological society because of his personalistic model, which considers any relationship beyond the one-to-one "I-Thou" relationship to be impersonal in proportion to the number of people that are involved.[1]

Justice and Economic Efficiency

This general critique of technical civilization rests largely on the values of a Christian civilization. The evaluation applies equally to all industrial economies, whether capitalistic or communistic. In addition to the values to which he appeals in his critique of technological civilization, Brunner employs several other criteria in judging the moral viability of economic systems. One basic criterion which we can discern in his economic ethic is the requirement that an economic order "must really nourish"; that is, it must provide the basic necessities not merely for physical survival, but for a human kind of life. In churchly language, the purpose of economic systems is to "minister to human needs" (DI, 402, 414). The Christian, of course, perceives this primary function as rooted in God's will, but this purpose is so built into the nature of the economic order itself that this requirement can be readily discerned on the basis of natural reason alone. Brunner concludes that however "humane" an economic system may be, it is more cruel than an overtly inhuman system if it fails to satisfy the basic needs of human life (DI, 425). The capitalism of the period of The Divine Imperative failed at precisely this point; it did not provide the essential conditions for human life. The Divine Imperative was published in 1932 against the background of the Great Depression, with its mass unemployment, hunger, and poverty. The economic order of that day could not fulfill its function as an order.

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[1] The religious and spiritual criteria by which Brunner judges the technological aspect of the economic order can also be applied to individual men. I have not dealt with this question in the text because I have been concerned to examine Brunner's treatment of particular economic orders as a problem of social ethics, not with the moral evaluation of individual economic agents. Brunner, of course, is interested in the latter question as well. His interest in the attitude of the agent lies behind his principle that the Christian can find ways of expressing love even in an economic order in which reform is impossible at the moment (DI, 433-34). Brunner also says that individuals can be judged by the importance that they place on material goods, the most notable aberrations being greed and materialism. Brunner feels that the "economic spirit of the age," especially the "spirit of Capitalism," has a strong tendency toward materialism. The desire for profit is only a step away from greed, which is a particularly dangerous spiritual problem in the present day. Wealth is not itself evil, but it is a source of great temptation, indeed almost irresistible temptation, which confronts those who desire wealth as well as those who are wealthy. The introduction of money and then that invention of capitalism, the joint stock company, made unlimited greed possible. As Brunner observes, one cannot imagine an infinite number of concrete material goods, but he can easily "add an indefinite number of ciphers to any given figure," so that it is possible to desire almost infinite wealth in the form of money and stocks (CC, II, 87). Thus modern capitalism presents the individual with an unprecedented spiritual problem of which he must be especially aware, lest he serve "Mammon" instead of God (KPK, 4; CC, II, 92).

Brunner thought that the Christian must condemn that kind of capitalism as economically ruinous, even if the "experts," presumably the professional economists, should say the opposite. But even the experts, Brunner quickly added, were aware of the technical weaknesses of capitalism and its economic inefficiencies (DI, 425-26). That economic order must be judged to be "disorder." It was chaos and anarchy, and the Christian was responsible for seeking to replace it with an order which was a real order. Of course, the struggle against capitalism was justified only to the extent that the reform could realize the primary aim of the economic order by providing genuine sustenance (DI, 393, 425-26). Brunner's plea for the reform of capitalism, including drastic changes of the economic structure, was an urgent appeal. He was quite emphatic in his evaluation that the Christian "who does not wish to deny the name of Christ" must, in his own way and in his place in life, support "all efforts to achieve a better order." The man who did not take part in this opposition movement was "simply supporting the existing 'order,'" and this meant that he was supporting "economic anarchy." Moreover, a man had no right to wait until a more appropriate moment if this delay meant that he was bolstering up the existing system (DI, 431-32). Hardly anywhere else in Brunner's ethical writings do we find such an urgent plea for reform as in the sphere of the economy.

Although West's criticism that Brunner limits his social concern to the change of heart in individual men is largely justified so far as the ethic of Christian civilization is concerned, it does not hold for Brunner's basic criticism of the capitalism of the depression period, which is based on a conception of the orders and a sensitivity to what constitutes a violation of the purpose of the orders. Nor does Brunner's analysis at this point completely "bypass the power problem," for Brunner recognizes the necessity of the Christian's involvement in the power struggle in the economic realm.[1]

> Whether we are dealing with the directly economic struggle, that is, with the struggle for power between the economic organizations by economic means of pressure; or with the struggle carried on by the political methods of the formation of parties and the power of Government, the fact remains: no one can or ought to withdraw from this struggle. (DI, 430-31)

If Brunner fails even here to engage in the careful analysis of power structures that West feels is necessary, it is not because he considers it illegitimate or unnecessary. Since such an analysis requires a special competency, it is quite likely that Brunner considers it a task for the "Christian specialist," whose participation in the common task of Christian moral thinking Brunner strongly encourages (CC, II, v).

But if the capitalism of the 1930's failed to provide for human needs, Brunner did not see communism faring any better. All that communism does, Brunner repeatedly says, is to make all men equally poor (CCC, 15; CC, II, 97). He clearly refuses to build a social ethic on the religious idea of the spiritual superiority of the poor, which has often provided an excuse for extreme social inequalities and widespread poverty, especially in pre-capitalist societies. What Brunner does not even consider is the question whether, given a situation in which widespread poverty is inescapable, it is not better that all share the same conditions of life, and therefore whether communism might not be best in some such situations. Furthermore, he does not consider what he might have to say if there were a situation in which a communist state succeeded in providing the necessities of life which a capitalistic system failed to provide. This never even occurs to Brunner as a possibility.

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[1] West, p. 45.

Brunner's criticism of both communism and capitalism on grounds of economic inefficiency is now dated, for all the major industrial countries, including the Soviet Union, have the capacity to produce all the goods their people need. The important question for these nations now becomes that of the distribution of these goods. This brings us to Brunner's next criterion.

Justice in Economic Distribution

The question of how economic produce should be distributed presupposes the answer to the question of the legitimacy of private property. Brunner thinks that man's fundamental right to freedom, which he maintains is built into the order of creation, entails the right to private property, since men are not really free unless they are free to possess, use, and dispose of certain material goods as they see fit. The most basic kind of private property is that which is most closely associated with the person--his clothes, household goods, house, and land. From this basic kind of property, Brunner expands the conception in the direction of other kinds of property that arise in a differentiated society. Brunner's observation of the connection between private property and the exercise of human liberty calls attention to a significant argument supporting the right of private property. But the model which he adopts to elaborate upon this idea seems old-fashioned. The economic situation of a member of a modern industrial system, who works for a set salary or for an established hourly wage, who may choose to live in an apartment that he does not own and may invest his savings in a wide variety of economic institutions, and who may pass on to his descendents not merely physical properties but all kinds of capital assets, is so unlike the peasant farmer that Brunner chooses as his model that the model has little value in either justifying or explaining the present economic order (JSO, 148-53).[1]

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[1] On the specific question of the right of private property, Brunner's economic view is quite similar to that set forth in John XXIII's Encyclical Mater et Magistra, par. 109, which likewise relates the right to property to the right of human freedom. However, the encyclical is in many ways much more responsive to the changing nature of the economies of the West than is Brunner's economic theory. It recognizes, for example, that some men in the present day are becoming less concerned about property and possessions than about developing a professional skill which can provide their needed income (see par. 106). But, of course, the increased emphasis on salaried skills has not abolished the fact of income accruing from capital investments nor the capital investments themselves, and Brunner's terms "possessions" and "property" includes all these elements.

However, Brunner's basic principle concerning property is not based on this model, but on the balancing of the freedom of the individual with the interest of the community. The right to property is a conditioned right, always limited by the "social reservation"; that is, the rights of property are always subject to control in the interest of human community. The Christian understands that property is always held under God, who limits property rights by the duty to the community (JSO, 149, 171; KPK, 16).[1]

The most natural kind of property is that which is earned by work, which in an industrial economy would be best described as income. Brunner is clearly influenced by the labor theory of value. The fact that a man labors in the production of something gives him some claim to a share in the product. But production in a complex economy is never an individual matter, so that the distribution of the product must be in some way related to the structure of the productive organization. Thus, according to Brunner, a just distribution must take account of the contribution of each of the component elements in the production process. The portion due to each man is a function of his contribution to the economic system. At this point, we must digress to examine Brunner's notion of functional hierarchy, which is related to the question of distribution.

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[1] Brunner's economic thought exhibits many striking similarities to that expressed in a papal encyclical of the same period as The Divine Imperative, Pius XI's Encyclical Quadragesimo Anno. That encyclical speaks of the necessity to bring "private ownership into harmony with the needs of the common good" (par. 49), which is parallel to Brunner's notion of a "social reservation." Mater et Magistra refers to the same qualification of private property as the "social function" of property (par. 119-21).

Brunner takes it to be an obvious fact of life clearly established in the order of creation that men are both alike and different; they are both equal and unequal. In German, the word for "alike" or "similar" (gleich) also means "equal," just as the word for "different" (ungleich) also means "unequal." Brunner thinks that men need one another because of their differences, so that the possibility and necessity of communal life rests on these differences. All men are alike and equal in dignity, but they are different and hence unequal with regard to their function. Social organization presupposes a hierarchy of functions. Because he wishes to restore the balance upset by what he considers a dangerously one-sided emphasis on equality in modern "rationalistic" thought, Brunner dwells more on the differences between men and the hierarchical arrangement of society than on the basic equality of all men; but he at least professes to rank equality above inequality in his assessment of ultimate priorities (CC, I, 122-26; TEB, 350).[1]

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[1] The model which Brunner repeatedly employs to illustrate the nature of the functional hierarchy is the family unit. Each member of the family has equal dignity, but the function of the father is different from that of the wife and child. Each member has different rights and duties. Brunner acknowledges that this model can be applied to other social institutions only with considerable modification, since other social organizations are constituted of adults who are not exactly comparable to the child. But he thinks that the analogy is still illuminating. Another model

Whether Brunner maintains the balance for which he argues is debatable. Moreover, his argument for structural hierarchy may rely too much on the mere fact of human difference and not sufficiently on the nature of social organization. But apart from his particular elaboration of the idea, the general principle which Brunner is espousing seems quite sound. Organized society does undeniably require functional authority and subordination. In an advanced economy, for example, there must of necessity be laborers and supervisors, whatever one chooses to call them. Moreover, men do differ in ability and interest, so that some men are qualified to be supervisors, engineers, accountants, and managers; others are gifted as skilled laborers or artisans; and some are able to work only as unskilled laborers.

Economic contribution, both in terms of ability and diligence, should be reflected in the economic distribution. Brunner argues that this gradation of economic rewards is required by a sense of justice, but also to ensure economic efficiency, since incentive depends upon such a gradation.

> Only in a society of perfect saints would it be possible to get a maximum of service and the necessary minimum of

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which he sometimes mentions is that of the army. Although it can serve a democratic society, the army cannot itself be a democracy. Its internal structure must have the functions of officer and soldier clearly defined, if it is to operate effectively and fulfill its purpose. Brunner insists that the structure of society in general, including the economic order, requires similar functional differentiation and authority (CC, I, 111-12, 117-21; CC, II, 63; KPK, 34; JSO, 65-75, 154, 187-92).

> functional differentiation with its different degrees of responsibility, without some kind of social privilege as a stimulus. Society has to pay for higher service the price of social privileges. (CC, II, 67)

Brunner continues with the observation that even the Bolshevist society learned the necessity of rewarding greater contribution with social privilege. He concludes that it would be a noble act for a Christian voluntarily to renounce all privilege, but that this cannot be made a principle of Christian ethics (DI, 467; JSO, 170).

There is, of course, considerable room to question whether in existing economic orders it is social contribution that is really rewarded. Since Brunner deals with the question only in the most general terms and does not engage in the evaluation of particular cases, we do not know to what extent he feels that particular existing economic institutions do assign rewards on the basis of contribution. But he does not appear to be a champion of the status quo in the economic realm. He insists that he is not bothered by the inequality of possessions per se, but that he is deeply disturbed by the radical disparity between the possessions of the rich and the poor. The extreme disproportion in distribution which leads to the luxury of the few demands careful moral scrutiny. The Christian doctrine of justice requires control of inequality, not by a leveling of possessions to create a condition of equality, but by compensation to mitigate the inequality of possessions (JSO, 156).

This seems a convenient point to pause to note the similarities of Brunner's view of economic justice to John Rawls's theory of justice as fairness. Rawls's two principles of justice resemble elements of Brunner's position. His first principle is that every person has an equal right to the most extensive basic liberty compatible with a similar liberty for others; and the second is that economic and social inequalities are to be arranged so that they are to everyone's advantage and are attached to positions and offices open to all. The first principle is simply the right to freedom, which Brunner grounds in the order of creation. The second principle admits the inevitability of inequality, which Brunner also acknowledges. The important aspect of Rawls's theory is his elaboration of this second principle, which he expounds in terms of an idea borrowed from the economic theory of efficiency. The economic principle is that a configuration is optimal whenever it is impossible to change it so as to make some persons better off without at the same time making others worse off. But since a number of different arrangements could be optimal in this sense, it is necessary to add another qualification; namely, of all the possible optimal arrangements, that one is best which can most improve the long term prospects of the least fortunate representative man. Thus the absolutely best arrangement is the case in which the expectations of the least advantaged are indeed maximized; that is, no change in the expectations of those better off can improve the situation of those worst off. A full elaboration of the implications of Rawls's principle for ethical theory would require more space than is available and would be unnecessary for the limited point I am trying to make.[1]

I am simply concerned to indicate that Brunner also has a similar conception of economic justice, though his development of it is not so detailed or sophisticated as is that of Rawls. An industrial hierarchy is necessary for the existence of the economic order which sustains the whole population. The justification for inequalities in economic distribution is that such unequal rewards are necessary to encourage the incentive without which the whole economic system would stagnate. Brunner, too, seems interested in promoting the welfare of the least fortunate, but he recognizes that profit sharing and redistribution cannot proceed so far as to discourage initiative or interfere with the capital formation which is essential for the continued well-being of the whole economic system. These principles apply not only to the distribution of the profits of production among the actual producers, but also to that portion of the profit that the owner of the company receives.

Brunner is not nearly so uneasy about the inequality of possessions that results from differences in ability and diligence in labor as he is about the extreme disproportion of property which results from the unearned income derived from interest.[1] This raises another thorny problem, the question of the justice of interest. The question strikes at the heart of the capitalistic system, since the whole economic structure of capitalism is predicated on the payment of interest for the use of capital.

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[1] John Rawls, "Justice as Fairness" (unpublished paper), especially pp. 26-33. (Mimeographed.)

Brunner examines the most important historical arguments against the taking of interest and finds that they do not apply to the capitalist system. Aristotle's objection, perhaps generally valid for his day, was based on his understanding of the unfruitfulness of money; that is, loans were made for consumption, not for production. The Biblical injunctions against taking interest were intended to prevent men from taking advantage of the dire need of individuals who needed money to survive; interest on such loans was a sin against charity. This prohibition has nothing to do with loans for production. The medieval church likewise prohibited "usury" for similar reasons, but the rent charge for the use of land was the medieval parallel for interest on productive capital (JSO, 155-58, 164; CC, II, 92).

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[1] Presumably Brunner intends the word "interest" to include all forms of return on economic investment, whether it be interest on loans or dividends on stock or even profits from a business of which one is the sole owner. He does not explicitly define interest so broadly, but his discussion seems to imply the more comprehensive notion and what he says is certainly applicable to all these types of "unearned" income on investment. In the case of the entrepreneur, we can distinguish between his "just wage" as manager and his "unearned income" as a capitalist.

Brunner thinks that the general principle of reasonable interest on productive loans is justifiable. Assuming the legitimacy of private property, a man who foregoes immediate enjoyment of some of the fruit of his labor and risks the possibility of loss by making these funds available as capital for production is entitled to a reasonable reward for his frugality and risk. Such income is "unearned," but it is not undeserved (JSO, 159-60). It is not the principle of interest that is morally abhorrent, but the extreme disproportion of such unearned income compared with the wages of the laborer. Classical capitalism has been characterized by excessive income from interest based on the exploitation of the worker. Brunner strongly insists that this evil, which Marx dramatized, must be corrected. He concludes that the history of capitalism indicates anything but a just distribution of economic produce. The necessary solution is the imposition of social controls on unearned income--the enforcement of the "social reservation" in the interests of the community--not the abolition of private capital and the creation of a socialist system.

Justice and Economic Power

The question of a just distribution of property leads naturally into the question of the just distribution of economic power. In the capitalistic system, possession of capital has meant historically the control of the economic order. Radical disproportion in the possession of property has resulted in the same disproportion in economic power. A serious evil has resulted from this concentration of power in the hands of capitalists. The evil, consisting of several aspects, could be described generally as the "sin against personality." When the capitalist alone has the power of economic decision-making, that is, when the worker is not considered a co-worker with the employer in the economic process, an associate with whom the employer must deal personally and to whom the employer must listen, then the worker becomes merely another tool to be used and cast aside when he is no longer profitable (KPK, 8-9, 18-19).

Brunner's critique of capitalism is especially strong at this point. Since the profit motive alone is the moving spirit of capitalism as Brunner defines it, the dignity of human labor in that system is denied because labor is only one more impersonal element in the rational calculation in the interest of profit. Such a system is a violation of the order of creation, for labor is not a commodity to be bought and sold; it is a service which establishes a communal relationship (DI, 418-21; JSO, 173-74).[1] The disregard for human personality and the ruthlessness of the system becomes especially acute when the owner of capital is separated from the work, that is, when ownership consists in "anonymous" stockholders who seek only profit and have no relationship to the workers at all (DI, 420; CC, II, 64, 68; KPK, 20).

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[1] A similar opinion about the dignity of labor is expressed in the Encyclical Quadragesimo Anno, par. 83.

The free labor contract which capitalism acclaims proves to be an illusion. The laborer is only theoretically free in the contract; practically speaking, he has no choice but to accept his employer's demands, since he must work in order to live. He is by no means an equal partner in the contract. The employer, upon whom he is dependent, controls the wages and determines the conditions of work. The economic slavery to which the worker is subjected robs him of human dignity; and this sin against personality and against the community of labor is, ethically speaking, the most serious consequence of capitalism, worse even than poor wages, insecurity, and unemployment (JSO, 195; KPK, 8-9; DI, 420-22).

But even this economic slavery does not exhaust the evil that results from the unjust distribution of economic power, for economic power has often been the means for securing other kinds of power as well, especially political power (CC, II, 90). Even apart from the influence and control accorded the wealthy in the formation of political policy, the capitalist can often exercise considerable direct control over the lives of his workers even in matters unrelated to the work process simply because he has the authority to dismiss a worker who refuses to comply with his demands; for example, he can often control his workers' political and social life (KPK, 18).

In contrast to this one-sided control, Brunner contends that men were destined to work in community, which excludes the domination of one group over another. The Christian can understand this idea of community more readily than can the unbeliever.

> The idea of a community of labour and organization is a necessary inference from the Christian view of the relationship established by labour. Where there is a just order of labour, employer and worker do not confront each other as exploiter and exploited, but as members of a labour community in which the welfare of the one is the welfare of the other. (JSO, 174)

From the understanding of the community of labor follows the notion of "community management" (KPK, 20). This does not mean "economic democracy," for such a venture would be economically ruinous (DI, 413-15). In industry, there must be a genuine, undelegated authority and a hierarchy of responsibility and competence of decision, according to Brunner. But the authority of the leader of industry is the authority of function, not personal authority. Moreover, the industrialist should share the responsibility of running the business with the workers in so far as they are capable of it (JSO, 193-94). This means that the worker should be given some voice in the formation of policy; owner and worker must respect each other and listen to each other. Above all, the idea that the worker is in a sense a partner in the work enterprise will mean that the owner will not summarily dismiss him the moment that it is no longer profitable to keep him, nor will the employer use his power of dismissal as a means of controlling the lives of his workers (JSO, 174; KPK, 18-20).

But if capitalism is to be censured for degrading the person of the worker by giving him too small a share in the distribution of power, the worker under communism fares no better. He is no more respected and listened to in a communist system than he is in a capitalist one. He is no longer the slave of the capitalist, but he becomes the slave of the state, so that he is subject to the bureaucracy, to the officers of the state, just as he was to the owner in the capitalist system. To replace capitalism with communism is to cast out the devils by Beelzebub (KPK, 10-11).

Concluding Evaluation of Communism and Capitalism

Brunner's general evaluation of communism and capitalism is that both fail to establish a balance between the rights of the individual and the rights of the community. Capitalism is individualistic; each man looks out for his own welfare. It strives for personal freedom detached from community and results in the economic enslavement of the majority under the despotism of the few. Communism, on the other hand, is collectivistic and strives for community apart from personal freedom. But the unity that it achieves is not community. It is a "uniform, non-articulated, mechanical unity," which recognizes no "mutual relationship between human beings," and therefore knows no "real exchange" (CCC, 10; DI, 405). The nationalization of the means of production under state socialism leads to totalitarianism, since every man becomes a functionary of the state. The system leads to tyranny, since force becomes necessary for the maintenance of the system. The worker eventually loses his freedom to strike or even to choose his place of work, and finally even the choice of a living place. Brunner appeals to the experience of the Russian state as evidence of the totalitarian character of communism (CC, II, 94; JSO, 278).[1]

Although both individualistic capitalism and collectivistic communism are violations of the divinely intended order of creation, communism is by far the more dangerous, because it not only denies freedom but also excludes the possibility of criticism, which is considered an offense against the state that must be suppressed and eliminated by force. Hence communism lacks the possibility of self-correction, which remains at least an occasional possibility in a capitalist system (CCC, 11).

Even though Brunner's assessment of the nature of Russian communism in its early years proved to be nearer the truth than that of other theologians, notably Karl Barth, it is a fault of Brunner's disposition that he was blinded by his extreme anti-communist persuasion. His position became so doctrinaire that it was impossible for him to learn from the communists. His dogmatic position led him to overestimate the evils accompanying a communist system of government and blinded him to changes in the communist system. Brunner recognized significant changes in the structure of capitalism in the West, and he altered his critique of capitalism accordingly. But he was insensitive to the changes in Russian society from the Leninist to the Stalinist to the post-Stalinist period. He did not feel constrained to revise his assessment of Russian communism because of the progress toward greater freedom as well as greater wealth in post-Stalinist Russia. Nor did he seem aware of the varities of communism which are becoming increasingly apparent.

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[1] In his Encyclical Quadragesimo Anno, par. 118-19, Pius XI likewise condemns communism for its offense against personal dignity in robbing men of their liberty, for its atheism and materialism, and for its excessive use of force.

One aspect of Brunner's critique of communism involves his understanding of the federal nature of the orders of creation. Brunner argues that the absorption of all social functions by the state, including the nationalization of the economy, violates the federalistic nature of the divine order. Federalism, which is roughly the same as "pluralism" in Anglo-Saxon theory, means the relative autonomy of each of the orders of creation and the structuring of society from the bottom to the top, instead of vice versa. The fundamental unit of society, according to Brunner, is the family, and there are numerous other functional units graduated in comprehensiveness all the way up to the most comprehensive unit, the state. Societal tasks should be accomplished by the smallest and most personal societal unit possible; that is, social institutions should be decentralized in so far as this is possible.[1] Brunner decries the tendency to turn to the state immediately for the solution of every social problem without first attempting to deal with it on a lower level of organization. The family is prior to the state, and the state has no right to assume absolute control over it. The same is true of all the voluntary associations below the level of the state. The state should not attempt to take over the tasks of these associations unless they are unable or unwilling to deal adequately with social problems. The concept of the sovereignty of the state not only conflicts with the rights of the individual, but also with the relative autonomy of the other orders. But totalitarian communism offends against the order of creation at exactly this point, for in a system of state socialism the state usurps the functions of all the orders, beginning with the economic order but extending to control over the family, the church, education, and so on. Federalism is the only viable alternative to totalitarianism, and excessive involvement of the state in the economic order is one sure road to totalitarianism (JSO, 134; CC, I, 114, 125-26; CC, II, 94, 121-23).

Brunner's idealization of the federal structure of Swiss society and government introduces an excessive parochialism into the discussion.[1] Likewise, his emphasis on accomplishing social tasks on the lowest possible level, combined with his phobia toward large organizations, can provide an excuse for neglecting necessary political action in the solution of social problems. Nevertheless, the general principle that the lower level societal structures do not derive from the state and are not entirely subservient to the state, but have a relative independence vis-a-vis the state, is an essential element in the case for a democratic society. Although Brunner may be too pessimistic about the internal controls that can operate even within a large system, even in a supposedly totalitarian nation, he is right in seeing that a pluralistic structure of society is an almost essential ingredient in deterring the movement toward totalitarianism.

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[1] Brunner's principle of federalism is quite similar to the principle of "subsidiary function" employed in the Encyclical Quadragesimo Anno, par. 80. However, Brunner's view is largely based on a fear of state intervention, whereas Pius XI emphasizes more the conservation of the energies of the state for the more important social tasks.

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[1] Brunner asserts that Switzerland is "probably the only country in which this non-rational principle [federalism] is carried through consistently, and where at the same time it is combined with the rational principle of the majority vote based on equality" (CC, I, 126). Unquestionably the federal nature of Switzerland's political constitution is more thoroughgoing than that of other Western nations. But so far as the pluralistic structure of the whole society is concerned, Brunner's preoccupation with Switzerland may have led him to underestimate the pluralistic loci of authority and power in other nations. His glorification of Switzerland may result from the tendency to conceive of federalism in too exclusively political terms. Brunner stresses federalism of political organization but tends to ignore the pluralistic structure of the whole society. Moreover, the Swiss federalism which Brunner admires is characterized by a kind of regionalism, with each canton functioning independently of the rest, whereas what is needed is overlapping and multi-dimensional pluralism.

Brunner's doctrine of federalism can be defended on the basis of several assumptions. First, the sovereignty of God precludes an absolute human power, Brunner tells us, and this excludes the absolute power of the state (CC, II, 117). But encroachment by the state can only be avoided by a division of power or a balance of power in a pluralistic structure (CC, II, 94-95). Likewise, the differentiation of the functions of social life given in creation requires a pluralistic structure. Brunner takes as his model for his ethic of the orders the modern differentiated society, which lies somewhere between the undifferentiated traditional society and the modern totalitarian society. The fulfillment of the functional tasks of society requires keeping the orders dynamically adaptive and free from interference with each other. Presumably this kind of understanding lies behind Brunner's doctrine of federalism, though he is never careful to explicate the reasoning by which he would justify his federalistic interpretation of the orders.

Brunner considers communism to be unalterably opposed to the federalistic principle, apparently so incapable of internal change that he never even mentions the possibility of the reform of communism. His proposals for reform always concern the reform of capitalism, partly because he was addressing himself to a Western European audience, but perhaps also because he saw no hope for the communist nations short of the overthrow of the communist regime.

Brunner's Proposals for Economic Reform

Now that we have observed Brunner's critique of both communism and capitalism, let us note the proposals which he suggests for mitigating the evils of capitalism, which he so ardently denounced. The solution of the problem of economic justice involves seeking a middle ground between the extremes of the radical individualism of capitalism and the collectivism of communism (DI, 406; JSO, 84, 176-80).[1] When Brunner declares that he wants neither communism nor capitalism, he means the laissez faire capitalism which was the model for his critique (CCC, 12, 43-44). His own proposal consists in a modified or controlled capitalism. Although he felt that the description of classical capitalism in The Divine Imperative fairly accurately characterized the capitalism of that period, he already perceived some movements in the direction of the reform which he was urging. Some anti-trust legislation and some laws protecting the worker had already been adopted; some social services were being provided; the power of labor unions was on the rise; and the state had become involved in the economic enterprise to a limited extent, all of which modified the effects of capitalism.

Brunner suggests three agencies for economic reform of the capitalist system. In a spirit in keeping with his ethic of Christian civilization, Brunner says that the best type of reform is that in which the capitalist imposes restrictions on himself. This is the ideal solution, and perhaps it is the only real and ultimate answer. But the ideal solution is also the most unlikely, since classes do not give up their privilege easily or willingly. Such self-limitation becomes more unlikely when the employer becomes a corporation with anonymous ownership of the firm's stock. But Brunner insists that reform cannot wait until all the capitalists learn to limit themselves voluntarily. Where the employer is unable or unwilling to accept the responsibility of self-limitation, other measures must be taken to ensure it (JSO, 174-79; CC, II, 93; DI, 430).

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[1] Again Brunner's thought is similar to that of Pius XI, for the Encyclical Quadragesimo Anno, par. 46 and 110, also enunciates the principle of steering between the "reefs of individualism and collectivism."

I submit that there is something insidious about making such voluntary reform the ideal for social ethics. Even though he recognizes the impossibility of this method as the sole or even the primary technique, the fact that Brunner espouses it as the ideal reinforces the recurrent theme that society can only be changed as individual men are changed. But such an appeal to the conscience of the individual employer is also ill-advised for a second reason, namely, the incompatibility of such an appeal with the proper operation of the orders. The employer who generously accepts his workers into a "community of labor," offering them the respect, participation, and financial rewards which Brunner feels they deserve, will likely find himself at an economic disadvantage if his competitors are not so kindly disposed. The whole structure of the economy needs to be changed, so that reform is required of all employers. In this way the capitalist is freed to act as a man of good will without thereby jeopardizing the success of his economic venture, upon which the financial security of his employees also depends. Brunner recognizes that "even the best-minded employer himself is part of a system which limits his good intentions" (CC, II, 93). He does not, however, perceive that this counts against his idealization of the voluntary type of reform.

The second agency of economic reform is the trade-union. Brunner hailed the growing power of the labor unions as a wholesome trend counterbalancing the monopoly of power by huge corporations. The labor union increasingly freed the laborer from the degrading dependence on the employer and gained dignity for the worker, liberating labor from its enslavement to an economic system where it was regarded merely as another commodity, a saleable good to be bought and sold on the basis of supply and demand (JSO, 169-73; DI, 413). So important was the labor union as a source of reform that Brunner strongly insisted that the support of a trade-union was a moral duty imposed upon the Christian. Even if one did not wish to strike in order to benefit himself, it was still his duty to do so for the sake of others (DI, 431).

As a last resort, Brunner says, reform is the business of the state. The action of the state is only a substitute for what could best be done voluntarily; that is, state involvement is only a makeshift solution in the absence of the good will of the employer (CC, II, 93; JSO, 174). Brunner's hesitancy about the intervention of the state in economic affairs arises from his too limited view of the state. It is evident that we should not turn too quickly to the state to solve all social problems so long as there are other lower level agencies which can deal with them adequately. But the regulation of so complex an operation as a modern industrial economy requires state action from the very beginning, and it is a disservice to the task of careful ethical reflection even to suggest that such political intervention is merely a makeshift.

But despite his proclivity to limit severely the role of the state and despite the reluctance with which he admits that state regulation of the economy is necessary, once Brunner concedes that economic reform must involve state action he proceeds with an impressive list of ways in which the state should act to control the economic system, so that state action in the economy becomes a real exception to his usual limited view of the function of the state. His proposals involve anything but the passivity and indirectness which are characteristic of his ethic of Christian civilization. The state must intervene in the economic process to ensure satisfactory wages and working conditions. It must require employers to guarantee the personal economic security of employees, including provision for insurance coverage for their workers. Likewise, the state must attempt to assure workers of a minimum standard of living even in times of unemployment. Brunner's proposal to achieve that end involves a legal requirement that employers place in a reserve fund a portion of the market gains during times of prosperity which would provide wages for employees during periods of economic crisis.

The state should regulate the distribution of economic produce and economic power to achieve a proper balance. The worker deserves a share in the profits of a company and a voice in its policy making. The principle for this adjustment is not equalization, but compensation for inequality, with an eye to preventing gross discrepancies. One mechanism for regulating the distribution of economic goods which Brunner endorses is the graduated income tax, which can prevent excessive fortunes and profits. But Brunner qualifies this proposal by saying that the degree of graduation that is economically feasible is determined by the degree of inequality that is necessary for effective capital formation, which, of course, is necessary for the continued health and growth of the economic system. On the question of the distribution of economic power, Brunner does not specify how the state should compel the capitalist to give his workers a share in the governance of the business; but presumably the legal support of labor unions helps to do so by strengthening the hand of the worker, and Brunner's novel proposal that the employer be legally obligated to locate other jobs for men whom he dismisses serves to limit the ability of the employer to dismiss union leaders arbitrarily (KPK, 19-21; JSO, 157, 175; DI, 408).

All of this points to the state's involvement in economic planning for the society. This planning extends not only to such measures as preventing the growth of monopolies which tend to develop in free market economies, but also to the regulation of both production and consumption, and sometimes, at least during times of serious economic crisis, even to the point of price regulation. Brunner asserts that economic planning is necessary both for the genuine supply of necessities and in the interests of freedom. Only planning can prevent the development of freedom destroying monopolies and the periodic unemployment and poverty of depression. Brunner is appalled by the haphazard and often frivolous operation of the completely free economy, which creates artificial demand by means of advertising and strives for profit without regard for damage to natural scenery, for workers' conditions of living, nor for the exhaustion of natural resources.

> The desire to purchase and the motive of profit alone are bad guides for national production. An economy based only on them--and that is a planless economy--is a huge extravagance which the community cannot afford for long and which is of necessity committed at the expense of the necessary wages of labour. (JSO, 182)

State planning can sometimes involve the government's direct engagement in economic enterprise, for example, the public ownership of industries where natural monopolies exist, as in public utilities. The advisability of public ownership is a pragmatic question, a matter of expediency in special cases (JSO, 178-80).

State planning need not promote state socialism. It can instead be used to maintain a free market. Brunner even contends that the state can promote the economic decentralization which he feels is urgently needed to counteract the increasing regimentation of economic life. The state can avoid becoming itself the decisive force in economics by encouraging the development or reconstitution of forms of association logically prior to the state. In other words, Brunner is suggesting that economic planning can be effective without leading to socialism if the state itself permits and encourages the maintenance of the federal principle of the orders by defending the freedom of free associations (CCC, 14-16).

The extent of these proposals for reform militates against the criticism that Brunner is only concerned with changing society by changing the hearts of individuals. Moreover, West's criticism that Brunner proposes only "mild reforms in the capitalist system along the lines already achieved" seems to underestimate the significance of some of Brunner's principles and concrete proposals.[1] To be sure, a convinced Marxist would consider such proposals as only minor alterations in the existing system, but the liberal democrat certainly should not. The major problem with Brunner's economic ethic is that it is vague, a problem which inheres in the nature of systematic as opposed to contextualist writing. But if Brunner does not instruct us concerning the precise application of his principles in particular situations, we do at least have some idea concerning the extent to which Brunner was willing to have the state engage in reform in that he found the "new social order" of postwar Britain compatible with his hopes for economic reform (CNSO, 14).

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[1] West, p. 44.

I am convinced that the major thrust of Brunner's economic ethic is along the lines which I have been describing; it represents his ethic of the orders at its best, with Christian and non-Christian actively cooperating to alter directly the structure of the economic order in the interest of justice. There are throughout his writings on economics, however, undertones of the ethic of Christian civilization. The theme of Christian civilization was already tacitly present, of course, in The Divine Imperative, where Brunner contended that "genuine faith, and the love which arises from faith, is the only creative and regenerating force in the sphere of economic ethics" (DI, 438). This theme emerges as the dominant one in the later part of Brunner's life, after significant changes in the structure of capitalism had been effected. His fear of the encroachment of the state led him to urge the British Christians, for example, to hold fast to the reforms that had been made, but not to attempt further structural change in the direction of socialization, lest legislative reform lead to totalitarianism in the West just as revolution led to totalitarianism in the East (CNSO, 14, 18).

Despite his urgent pleas for economic reform, there are the recurrent hints of the "indirectness" of real reform. Only the gospel can give meaning to the work of the laborer on the assembly line (CC, II, 69). Only the Christian understanding of personalism and community can provide the solution to economic problems (CC, II, 100). Only the Christian conception of economic justice, which combines freedom of property and initiative with responsibility to the community can steer a national economy between the extremes of individualistic capitalism and collectivistic communism (JSO, 183). Apart from Christianity the combination of individualism and collectivism, authoritarianism and egalitarianism "is possible only as a matter of chance without any inner necessity" (CC, I, 121). In one of his more extreme statements, Brunner implies that whatever stability and humanity the economic order of the West exhibits is largely the result of the silent but forceful historical tradition of Christianity. The ability of Britain to nationalize significant segments of the economy without falling victim to complete control by the state depends upon the strength of the liberal Christian tradition in Britain (CNSO, 17). In the end, perhaps, after the reforms for which Brunner appealed so urgently in his early writings had been at least partly accomplished, Brunner adopted a more passive attitude toward economics, more in line with his general position in other areas of social concern. The ethic of Christian civilization becomes dominant over the ethic of the orders. Especially does he see the solution to the evils of technocratization as resting in the revival of Christian civilization, since, as we noted earlier, it is secularization that lies at the heart of that problem. Thus Brunner's economic thought is a mixture of the elements of the ethic of the orders and the ethic of Christian civilization, with one aspect being predominant in one period and context, and the other becoming dominant at another time and in another context.

CHAPTER VI

THE METAETHICAL LEVEL

The preceding chapters have dealt with some of the problems of normative ethics as that area is related to religion. I have been attempting to show how Brunner determines what actions and dispositions are morally good and how he relates faith and theology to morality and ethics. In this final chapter, I wish to focus attention on some questions that lie beyond the realm of normative ethics, questions in the area normally designated as metaethics. These questions concern the nature of Brunner's normative language and the justification of his normative principles.

The fundamental normative term in Brunner's vocabulary is the word "good." The first problem in the metaethical analysis of his language is that of distinguishing between the moral and the non-moral uses of "good" in his thought. The distinction between moral and non-moral value is a familiar though problematic feature of philosophical ethics. The difference between moral and non-moral value is obvious in the two following statements: (1) It is good to give to the poor. (2) That is a good car. But other uses of good are more difficult to analyze, so that philosophers often disagree in their analyses of particular value statements.

Judgments of moral value are often closely related to judgments of non-moral value. For example, the judgment that pleasure is good in the sense of a non-moral value becomes for the hedonist the basis of the judgment of moral value that it is morally good to seek pleasure, from which in turn is derived the judgment of moral obligation that men ought to seek pleasure.

A similar analysis can be suggested regarding Brunner's uses of "good." Many of his statements can be taken as judgments of non-moral value; the specific kind of value involved could be called "religious" or "spiritual" value. Brunner's assertion that "nothing is good, nothing in the whole world, save union with God" states one such judgment of religious value which implies that it is good and indeed obligatory to seek fellowship with God (DI, 58). But whether this is to be considered a moral duty or a religious duty is debatable. Brunner would consider it a religious duty, since he reserves the term "moral" for describing relations between men. But this religious duty has moral implications, for fellowship with God affects the way a man acts toward his neighbor. Likewise, the statement that faith alone is good is a statement of non-moral value, which again has moral implications. Certainly Brunner does not intend his assertion that "God alone is good" to be taken as a judgment of moral value, for he denies that we can pass moral judgment on God. The judgment that God is good is rather the presupposition and root of all morality.

Finally, it is not entirely clear that the judgment that "the Good is simply and solely the will of God" is a judgment of moral value, but the related judgment that it is good to imitate God's action and to do his will is clearly an assertion of moral value (DI, 71, 56, 83, 309).

I argued in Chapter II that the logically fundamental ethical principle of Brunner's system is the moral judgment that obedience to the command of God is good, or to use Brunner's own words, "The Good consists in always doing what God wills at any particular moment" (DI, 83). This judgment of moral value can also be stated as a judgment of moral obligation by saying that men ought always to obey the particular commands of God, which Brunner approximates when he says, "We have no other duty save to serve God" (DI, 188).

Up to this point in the discussion, I have held in abeyance the question of the ultimate justification of these judgments. I have been concerned to show how Brunner's ethical reflection proceeds, assuming the validity of what I take to be his fundamental ethical principle. For the sake of interpreting other aspects of his thought, I have been granting him his assumption that the basis of moral value is "wholly religious" (DI, 58). The time has now come to ask how Brunner would support this basic contention which I have been assuming. The primary problem for this chapter is that of the rational defense of Brunner's basic ethical principle and of his assumption about the necessity of a connection between religion and morality.

Such a defense is commonly known in philosophical circles as a theory of justification. Since this terminology may lead to confusion for the theologically oriented reader, I must make it clear that a theory of justification of ethical principles is to be differentiated from a religious doctrine of justification. In order to avoid possible confusion, I shall use the phrase "theoretical justification" to refer to the philosophical theory of metaethical justification, which must be distinguished from the theological doctrine of justification. The theoretical justification is concerned with the reasons that we would give for holding a certain moral judgment or ethical principle to be valid; the doctrine of justification is concerned with the theological problem how a man comes to have a right standing before God, i.e., how the sinner receives forgiveness and a new righteousness in the eyes of God. The theologian's doctrine of justification may serve his theoretical justification, when, for example, he argues that we ought to do what God wills because he has freely and graciously justified us. But the fact that a doctrine of justification might be cited within a theoretical justification as an explanation of why men ought to obey God must not be permitted to obscure the distinction between the two very different kinds of problems that are involved. This chapter is concerned with the problem of Brunner's theoretical justification of his fundamental ethical principle.

In the initial stage of this chapter, I shall let the philosophers raise the questions of metaethics, and in so far as it is possible I shall attempt to explicate Brunner's position in their terms. At a later point, however, I must go beyond the philosophical discussion to show that Brunner's theological-ethical position cannot be finally contained within these philosophical presuppositions, and I shall then continue the analysis and critique of Brunner on his own terms.

Brunner's Metaethic and Philosophical Issues

I can best introduce the problem of theoretical justification by referring again to William Frankena's treatment of the relation of religion and morality. I have mentioned in previous chapters three types of dependence of morality on religion that Frankena thinks men might wish to assert. The fourth type of possible dependence, and the one that Frankena says is the really crucial question, is that of logical dependence.[1] Logical dependence would mean that a theological assertion is required to justify logically an ethical assertion. For example, the assertion of logical dependence might involve attempting to justify the ethical assertion, "I ought to do X," by reference to the theological assertion, "God commands me to do X," or to turn the argument around the theologian might argue that from the theological statement, "God commands me to do X," the ethical assertion,

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[1] Frankena, Harvard Educational Review, XXXI, 423-24.

"I ought to do X," logically follows. I showed in Chapter II that Brunner does connect theological and ethical statements, and it may appear that it is this kind of logical connection that is involved. But Frankena contests this kind of logical dependence. The derivation of a statement about moral obligation from a statement about God's command is only apparent, Frankena argues, for the statement of obligation and the statement about the command of God are in fact connected by a suppressed moral proposition, namely, "I ought to do what God commands." In another article Frankena notes that many apparently fallacious arguments are enthymemes containing a suppressed premise. When this premise is made explicit, the arguments then are valid and contain no logical fallacy.[1]

To illustrate the logical relationships involved in the case of the theologian, Frankena provides a sample syllogism:

> We ought to be grateful to those who have been good to us.
> God has been good to us.
> Therefore we ought to be grateful to Him.
> But being grateful to Him entails worshipping Him.
> Therefore we ought to worship Him.[2]

The first part of the argument contains one theological premise, "God has been good to us." But it also has one moral premise, "We ought to be grateful to those who have been good to us." The conclusion that we ought to be grateful to God is a judgment of moral obligation which cannot be derived from the theological premise alone, but can only be deduced from the theological premise taken in conjunction with the ethical premise. The argument illustrates the point, now a truism in moral philosophy, that statements of obligation cannot be derived simply from statements of fact, or, as it is often phrased, an "Ought" cannot be logically derived from an "Is." All moral syllogisms must contain one moral premise. So, Frankena concludes, "justifying arguments rest ultimately, at least in part, on moral principles which do not depend logically on theological or other premises."[1] One of these principles could be that we ought to do what God commands, as Brunner contends, but this is a moral principle, not a theological proposition, according to Frankena, and it cannot follow logically from any theological proposition.[2]

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[1] William K. Frankena, "The Naturalistic Fallacy," Readings in Ethical Theory, ed. Wilfrid Sellars and John Hospers (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1952), p. 106.

[2] Frankena, Harvard Educational Review, XXXI, 424.

The implications of Frankena's position for Brunner's ethic can be demonstrated by constructing other syllogisms on Frankena's pattern in terminology more closely akin to that of Brunner.

> Men always ought to do what God wills (major premise).
> God wills that men should act from love (minor premise).
> Therefore men always ought to act from love (conclusion).
>
> I ought to do what God commands (major premise).
> God commands me to do X (minor premise).
> Therefore I ought to do X (conclusion).

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[1] *Ibid.*

[2] *Ibid.*

Each of these arguments has a theological premise (the minor premise), the first dealing with the motive for action and the second with the act itself. But each also includes a moral premise (the major premise), and to establish the dependence of morality upon religion we would have to show that the major premise itself depends upon some theological proposition. Frankena asserts that the theologian must admit the existence of at least one moral principle which cannot be derived from theological propositions, namely, that we ought to do what God wills.

Frankena's point seems unquestionably valid. The theologian might be entirely willing to accept the argument and admit that the fundamental principle that men ought to obey God is a moral judgment that cannot be derived *logically* from a theological proposition. Still the acceptance of this ethical principle as the fundamental principle would mean that the judgment of the rightness or wrongness of particular actions is made by determining whether the deeds correspond to the will of God or are in opposition to that will. In other words, admission on the metaethical level that the fundamental ethical principle must be justified independently of religion does not exclude the possibility that the rest of the moral system is dependent on religion, if the fundamental principle is similar to Brunner's. If the fundamental normative principle is that we ought to obey God, then the normative level must necessarily depend upon knowing what the will of God is. In this case, the entire normative delineation of what things ought and ought not to be done would be dependent on religion, and only the first principle would be independent.

But Frankena's argument only relocates the problem. Even if the theologian were content to acknowledge the independence of that one principle, most philosophers would not readily accept the fundamental principle that we ought to do what God commands. The question still remains whether that ethical principle can be justified. It is not really very helpful to discover that every moral syllogism must have a moral premise. The really important issue is how that moral premise, whatever it may be, is to be justified or whether it can be justified at all. If Frankena has shown that no basic ethical principle can be logically justified by reference to theology, his argument also shows that no ethical principle whatever can be justified *logically*. Frankena indicates as much by saying that moral principles do not depend logically on theological *or other premises*.[1] His argument is intended to show that all ethical principles are logically independent, that is, that no ethical principle can be justified on the basis of logic. Frankena's logical analysis may show us what our fundamental ethical principles are, but having determined what principle or group of principles is logically fundamental, logic itself cannot tell us whether the principle or principles are justifiable or not. Does this mean that we have no reasons for holding one principle instead of another, that no ethical principle is better than any other principle? Although it may be that no finally satisfactory reason for preferring one principle to another can be found, few of us are willing to admit that the choice of moral principles is purely arbitrary and that one principle is no more reasonable than any other.

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[1] *Ibid*.

Types of Theoretical Justification

Since moral philosophers have long been concerned with the question of the theoretical justification of ethical principles, an examination of the general historical approaches to this problem should help to clarify the issues that are involved. Historians of moral philosophy have discerned in the writings of moral philosophers three basic ways of understanding morality and the logic of ethics. The three generally accepted categories--naturalism, nonnaturalism, and noncognitivism--are essentially ideal types in the Weberian sense, and each type is associated with a particular kind of theoretical justification. Let us note how Brunner's writings exhibit similarities to each of these classical types.[1]

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[1] Two works that are helpful in introducing the student to the general historical approaches to the problem of theoretical justification are Richard B. Brandt's Ethical Theory: The Problems of Normative and Critical Ethics (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1959) and a book mentioned previously, Frankena's Ethics.

Naturalism

The naturalist asserts that moral terms are connected with certain natural properties. There are numerous varieties of naturalism, depending upon which natural property is identified with the good. The classic example is utilitarianism. The utilitarian identifies moral value with the possession of the natural property of being conducive to the greatest happiness of the greatest number of people. If this identification were correct, then we could know what action was best by calculating on the basis of empirical data to determine what would be most conducive to the greatest happiness of the greatest number. The religious version of naturalism is sometimes simply categorized with naturalism, but more often it is characterized as "theological naturalism,"[1] "supernaturalism,"[2] or "metaphysical morality."[3] The religious version of naturalism might identify moral value with the will of God or the command of God. If the supernaturalistic account is correct, then we would ascertain what particular actions are good by determining which actions are in accordance with the divine will.

If the naturalist (or supernaturalist) is asked to justify his identification of goodness with a natural fact (such as being conducive to the greatest happiness of the greatest number) or with a metaphysical or theological

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[1] C. D. Broad, Five Types of Ethical Theory (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1930), p. 259.

[2] Brandt, p. 72.

[3] Frankena, Ethics, p. 81.

"fact" (such as being in accordance with the will of God), he would simply reply that the identification is based on the *meaning* of the word "good." The utilitarian would argue that when men use the word "good" they *mean* "conducive to the greatest happiness of the greatest number of people," and a large part of the utilitarian argument is often an attempt to convince the reader that that is really his meaning as well. The supernaturalist, by the same token, would insist that "good" simply means "commanded by God." Naturalism, then, is fundamentally a theory about the *meaning* of ethical statements.[1] According to the naturalist, ethical judgments are disguised assertions of a fact of some kind, either natural or metaphysical or theological.[2] If a definition is acceptable, then we can move logically from a factual assertion (for example, "X is conducive to the greatest happiness of the greatest number" or "X is in accordance with the will of God") to an ethical assertion ("X is good"), because good simply means "conducive to the greatest happiness of the greatest number" or "willed by God" or whatever may be taken as the definition.

Because the naturalist's theoretical justification rests on the definition of ethical terms, Frankena also refers to naturalistic theories as "definist" theories. The definition can be of two sorts. It can be a reportive or a reforming definition.[1] In the first instance, the proponent of a definition is purporting to report the way in which men actually use moral terms. Reportive definitions are open to empirical investigation to determine whether men do actually use language in that way. Frankena interprets the force of G. E. Moore's famous "naturalistic fallacy" and "open question" argument as an attempt to refute all definist theories by showing that men do not in fact use the word "good" to mean any of the things which the definitions of naturalists suggest. To illustrate the open question argument, let me take the utilitarian definition of good. Moore says that we can say, "X is conducive to the greatest happiness of the greatest number of people," and still ask meaningfully, "but is X good?" The fact that this question makes sense to us indicates, Moore thinks, that "good" does not mean "conducive to the greatest happiness of the greatest number." Since no definition seems to pass this test, Moore concludes that "good" is an indefinable term, a simple word like "yellow" that cannot be defined in terms of other natural properties. Frankena thinks that Moore and his successors have merely assumed, but have not proved, that ethical terms cannot be defined by nonethical terms.[2]

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[1] Brandt, p. 155.

[2] Frankena, *Ethics*, p. 81.

Probably no single definition in terms of natural or metaphysical properties does report accurately the way in which all men use the word "good," since different men apply the term in mutually contradictory ways. But even if it could be proved that none of the definitions which naturalists have proposed does in fact report what men actually mean by moral terms, it would still be possible for the moralist to propose reforming definitions, that is, to suggest what we ought to mean when we use certain value words.

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[1] Ibid., p. 80.

[2] Frankena, Readings in Ethical Theory, pp. 103-14.

In some ways, Brunner's ethic resembles the naturalistic type, or to be more precise, the supernaturalistic variety of naturalism. Brandt explicitly characterizes him as a supernaturalist,[1] and Kai Nielsen implies that Brunner is a naturalist who commits Moore's naturalistic fallacy or at least that he employs a reforming definition of good.[2] Brunner does quite clearly identify moral value with obedience to the command of God. Methodologically, at least, Brunner is quite similar to the naturalists, for he thinks that the way in which we know whether an action is good or bad is by determining whether it possesses the particular property of being in accordance with the will of God. But it is not so certain that Brunner's identification of being good and possessing the property of being willed by God rests on the definition of "good." Brunner is a naturalist (or supernaturalist) to the extent that naturalism implies a certain methodology, but the category is less clearly applicable to Brunner in so far as naturalism is a theory about the meaning of ethical statements, i.e., in so far as naturalism purports to be true by definition. I think it is clear that Brunner's statements about the good are not to be taken as reportive definitions, for he knows that most people do not use the word "good" in the same way that he does. He contrasts the "Christian conception of the Good" with other conceptions of good (DI, 82), distinguishes between the Christian understanding of the good and "all that is otherwise called good" (DI, 90), and refers to the "true Good" or the "genuine Good" as it is distinguished from the "so-called good" (DI, 58, 600). Brunner is certainly aware that the meaning of good in the ordinary morality of the natural man and in the rational ethic of the philosopher is anything but the Christian understanding of "commanded by God." Thus he is not reporting what most men mean by "good." If his statements are definitions at all, they are reforming definitions.

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[1] Brandt, p. 72.

[2] Kai Nielsen, "Some Remarks on the Independence of Morality from Religion," Christian Ethics and Contemporary Philosophy, ed. Ian T. Ramsey (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1966), pp. 141-44.

It seems more reasonable, however, not to consider Brunner's statements as proposals for linguistic reform, that is, as proposals for redefining ethical terms, but as assertions of ethical truth, i.e., as synthetic propositions. C. D. Broad distinguishes between two easily confused propositions:

> (a) "The ethical characteristic E synthetically entails and is entailed by the non-ethical characteristics N_1, N_2,...."; and (b) "The ethical characteristic E is

> analysable without remainder into the conjunction of the non-ethical characteristics N_1, N_2...."[1]

With regard to Brunner's statements about the good which are sometimes considered to be definitions, I suggest that a proposition similar to (a) more accurately describes the logic of Brunner's position than a proposition like (b). Let us suppose that Brunner is in a discussion with someone holding different ethical views, say, a member of the Nazi Party. The Nazi might say, "The good action is that one which is in accordance with the destiny of the German people." If Brunner were a reportive definist, he might logically respond, "No, on the basis of common usage "good" means "commanded by God," so we should do as you say only if God commands it." To be sure, even the orthodox definist would attempt a more persuasive statement than this, but this is the logic of the definist's position. If, on the other hand, Brunner were offering a reforming definition of good, he might logically respond to the same remark by saying, "I would prefer that you not use 'good' like that; I propose that we use it to mean 'willed by God.'" But we would really expect Brunner to reply somewhat as follows: "Your ethical judgment is mistaken. Your fundamental principle is incorrect. Your ethical statement is false."

What I am proposing is that Brunner's statements about the good should not be taken as assertions about the way in which language is or should be used, but that they are assertions about what actions are good, namely, those that are in accordance with the will of God. R. M. Hare makes a distinction between the "meaning" of a word and the "criteria for its application."[1] I am suggesting that Brunner assumes that the meaning of good as the most general word of commendation is understood, and that his statements establish his criterion for the application of the term; that is, he is committed to applying the word good to those actions and only to those actions which are willed by God.

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[1] Broad, p. 258.

The ethical issue with which Brunner is concerned is more than a truth about language or about the meaning of ethical words. Frankena implies that any pure definist theory merely relocates the problem of justification. Before we would accept any definition of moral terms, we would want to know how that definition is justified or why we should accept it. He argues that when we are asked to accept any definition of moral terms, we are in effect asked to accept the corresponding ethical principle. Of R. B. Perry's proposed reforming definition, Frankena says,

> As far as I can see, when Perry tries to persuade us to accept his definition of "right," he is in effect persuading us to accept, as a basis for action, the ethical principle that what is conducive to harmonious happiness is right. He cannot establish his definition first and then show us that this principle is valid because it is true by definition. He cannot establish his definition unless he can convince us of the principle.[2]

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[1] R. M. Hare, The Language of Morals (New York: Oxford University Press, 1952), p. 102.

[2] Frankena, Ethics, p. 84.

This idea applies equally to reportive definitions, for even if we should agree that a reportive definition accurately describes the way men do use language, we should still want to know whether we should continue the usage.

> In other words, to advocate the adoption of or continued adherence to a definition of an ethical or value term seems to be tantamount to trying to justify the corresponding moral principle. Appealing to a definition in support of a principle is not a solution to the problem of justification, for the definition needs to be justified, and justifying it involves the same problems that justifying a principle does.[1]

R. B. Brandt makes what seems to be a somewhat similar point in a very different context. In a critique of moral philosophers who purport to limit their examination to an analysis of the common language of the community, Brandt argues that the moral philosopher should not feel that he has provided a satisfactory conceptual network for ethics simply by describing the conceptual network that "represents accurately the actual moral language of the community."[2] He is suggesting, I think, that ethics cannot be content merely with description and definition, but that it also has a normative element.

The justification for Brunner's primary principle that men ought to obey God cannot be established simply by showing that this principle is in accordance with common linguistic usage, nor merely by proposing new definitions for key ethical terms, and Brunner does not seem to be attempting such a justification. But if we are to accept Brunner's principle, he must give us reasons for accepting what is, in effect even if it were not so in intent, an ethical principle. Definism of any kind is inadequate or incomplete as a theoretical justification.

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[1] Ibid.

[2] R. B. Brandt, Moral Philosophy and the Analysis of Language, Department of Philosophy, University of Kansas (1963), p. 15.

Non-naturalism

A second major type of ethical theory, a classical alternative to naturalism, is what Frankena calls non-naturalism or intuitionism. Proponents of this position hold that basic ethical principles are intuitive or self-evident. Non-naturalists argue that their basic principles do not need to be justified by any kind of argument, since they are self-justifying. Frankena expresses concisely the significant difference between intuitionism and naturalism.

> Definist theories imply that ethical terms stand for properties of things, like being desired or being conducive to harmonious happiness, and that ethical and value judgments are simply statements ascribing these properties to things. Intuitionists agree to this, but deny that the properties referred to by words like "good" and "ought" are definable in nonethical terms.[1]

The properties of at least some of these ethical terms are indefinable, i.e., they are simple and unanalyzable, just as yellowness or pleasantness are. Thus where the definist would call a particular action good because it possesses a certain natural or metaphysical property, the intuitionist would call the action good because it is self-evident to him that the action possesses the indefinable non-natural property of goodness. The non-naturalist agrees with the naturalist that ethical statements are statements about facts and are true or false, according as they describe these facts correctly or incorrectly. The difference is in the different kinds of facts--natural or non-natural--and in the way in which we know them to be true, namely, by intuition or self-evidence.[1]

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[1] Frankena, Ethics, p. 86.

Brandt divides non-naturalists into two groups, depending on whether the non-natural property of goodness is known by intuition or by rational insight.[2] The rational insight version holds that our rational minds see that certain ethical propositions must be necessarily true in a way similar to that by which our minds can know that space has three dimensions or that anything that is red is colored. The intuitionists, in Brandt's sense, feel that the rational insight theory is too intellectualistic. The intuitionist version concentrates more on moral awareness, moral sensitivity, or feelings of obligation. Frankena construes the term "intuitionism" more broadly, and includes both of Brandt's types of non-naturalism under the category of intuitionism.

For many people the word "intuitionism" implies that kind of morality in which the agent perceives in each concrete instance of decision what is right for that situation.

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[1] Brandt, Ethical Theory, p. 152.

[2] Ibid., pp. 187-89.

But the "intuition" need not be limited to particular acts. It may also be that general principles are intuited. Henry Sidgwick felt that the only satisfactory theoretical justification was intuitionism. But the principles which he felt were self-evident were essentially those of utilitarianism, so that he was methodologically more like a utilitarian.[1] Likewise, G. E. Moore developed an ideal utilitarianism on the basis of the intuition of several basic ideal goods which he felt were immediately obvious to all men.[2]

Brunner's ethic reflects the philosophical tradition of German idealism, and the issues that are important for him are generally those of that school of thought. Because he did not approach the problems of ethics from the Anglo-Saxon analytical perspective and because he did not use distinctions and terminology which have become familiar in that tradition, it is difficult to know exactly how Brunner would respond to some of the questions which English and American philosophers have raised. But it is probable that Brunner's ethic has more affinities with intuitionism or non-naturalism than it has with the supernaturalistic form of naturalism. Brunner would almost certainly insist with the intuitionists on the objectivity of the good and on the assumption that ethical statements are either true or false. Moreover, it may well be that Brunner's fundamental ethical principle is to be justified on the basis of intuition. In other words, it may be that the assertion that all men ought to do the will of God was "self-evident" to Brunner. If this interpretation is correct, then Brunner's theoretical justification, like Sidgwick's, involves the intuition that his fundamental ethical principle is true. Such a theoretical justification of the basic principle says nothing about the subsequent method of applying the principle.

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[1] Henry Sidgwick, The Methods of Ethics (7th ed.; London: Macmillan and Company Ltd., 1907), especially pp. 373-90.

[2] George Edward Moore, Principia Ethica (Cambridge: The University Press, 1903), especially Chapter 6.

Brunner's whole theory of religious epistemology, i.e., his theory about how we know God and other religious truth, is somewhat similar to intuitionism. As even the title of his work on this question indicates, truth is encounter; that is, truth about God is available to man only as man meets God personally. Although the Christian does possess the Scriptures against which he can check his experience, there is no public test by which both Scriptures and personal experience can be verified, just as there is no final public test for the claims of the intuitionist. Ultimately faith in God is a personal matter resting upon each man's conviction that he has met God in a Divine-human "I-Thou" encounter, just as each intuitionist is finally left with his own conviction that his intuition is really self-evident. But if Brunner's theory is similar to intuitionism in its ultimate appeal to self-evidence, it is quite different from some recent forms of intuitionism in so far as the

Christian believer claims that his "immediate knowledge" is knowledge which comes from an encounter with something outside of the man himself, i.e., from the revelation of God, whereas recent intuitionists are more inclined to focus on what seems self-evident or rationally necessary to the human reason itself.

If the fundamental ethical principle which Brunner accepts as well as all knowledge of God is known by means of something like an intuition, it still remains to ask how this fundamental principle is to be applied. A little earlier I suggested that Brunner's methodology might be somewhat like that of the naturalist, since finding out what ought to be done in a particular situation involves determining what action possesses the property of being in accordance with the will of God. But as I pointed out in Chapter II, the fundamental principle that all men ought to obey the command of God is of almost no practical help in determining what specific action should be taken. Ethical principles on the highest level of generality are formal by nature, since they are normally used as tests for lower level rules of conduct. Brunner's principle is absolutely empty, because without some further knowledge of the nature of God and his will, we would have no idea at all what kinds of acts would be commanded and prohibited. To apply Brunner's fundamental principle requires additional knowledge.

The manner in which this additional knowledge is acquired, at least in Brunner's initial statement of the matter, again resembles a variety of intuitionism, that of act-deontologism. The act-deontologist insists that in each particular situation men perceive intuitively their duty for that situation. As I observed in an earlier chapter, Brunner contends that the believer must listen for the concrete command of God in the particular moment of decision. Obviously the believer's knowing the will of God by means of a concrete command enables him to know what he ought to do only because he subscribes to the fundamental principle that he ought to do whatever God commands. Of course, we might say that the act-deontologist has a similar principle, namely, that in every situation he ought to do what he feels his duty to be in that situation. Practically speaking, Brunner's idea of the concrete command is quite similar to the sense of obligation that the act-deontologist experiences. But unlike the act-deontologist, Brunner allows for a great deal more preparation for the moment of the command.

Non-naturalism is now generally out of favor with philosophers. One reason for its decline was the lack of agreement among non-naturalists about what ethical truths are self-evident. Although this divergence of opinion is problematic for many philosophers, who would feel that if a truth were self-evident it should be so to all rational men, disagreement presents no such problem for Brunner, since it can be explained by the blinding effects of human sin. Another philosophical problem with non-naturalism is its idea of simple properties of a non-natural or normative sort. Contemporary philosophers tend to think such notions too esoteric; they insist that they simply cannot understand what is meant by a "non-natural property." Most contemporary philosophers do not think that ethical judgments are property-ascribing statements at all, either natural or non-natural. Their alternative interpretation of ethical statements will be treated as the third type of ethic. Brunner probably resembles the non-naturalists more than he does either of the other two types. However, he also exhibits significant similarities to the third type, to which we must now turn our attention.

Noncognitivism

The third type of theory, commonly called noncognitivism or nondescriptivism, is so greatly diversified that it is difficult to characterize it generally. However, all the variations on this theme agree that both the naturalists and the non-naturalists are mistaken in thinking that ethical statements ascribe either natural or non-natural properties to actions, persons, or things. The most extreme exponents deny that ethical judgments are capable of any kind of rational or objectively valid theoretical justification. One of the early exponents of noncognitivism, A. J. Ayer, argues that both ethical and religious statements are similar to cries like "ouch!" or are like saying "Killing bleah!" Rudolf Carnap contends that ethical statements are merely disguised imperatives, which have no rational justification. In a somewhat less extreme fashion, C. L. Stevenson asserts that ethical sentences are expressions of attitudes, but he goes farther than Ayer by showing that they are attempts to persuade others to adopt the same attitudes of approval or disapproval. Still less extreme is a group of philosophers, particularly in the Oxford analytical tradition, who interpret ethical statements as evaluations, recommendations, or prescriptions. Many of these men think that ethical sentences are the kinds of statements about which we can reason.

The advocates of this most recent form of noncognitivism seem interested in rational argument and rational justification up to a point, but at some stage the philosopher seems forced to admit that a decision of principle must be made for which no further justification can be offered. R. M. Hare, for example, engages in an analysis of the logic of moral language. He argues that using moral language logically commits one to universalizing his prescriptions; in other words, I can properly say that X would be a good thing for me to do in circumstances C only if I would say that X would be good for any person in similar circumstances. If this logic of moral language were acknowledged by everyone, Hare feels, a fairly general moral consensus would be achieved, since most people do not wish to be treated in certain ways themselves and hence they logically should refrain from treating others in this manner. But if someone, for example a Hitler, should say sincerely, "All Jews should be killed, and, assuming hypothetically that I am a Jew, I hold that I, too, should be executed," then Hare would say that rational argument has come to an end. In the end, the decision on that principle which one is willing to universalize marks the limit of the attempt to justify actions or principles rationally. If a man is willing to apply his principle universally, even to his own detriment, then nothing more can be said to refute his position.[1]

Stephen Toulmin likewise represents the more rational kind of noncognitivism. Toulmin is concerned with rational argument within a given social context. Within that context, reasons can be given for ethical judgments, but there are limiting questions, questions which challenge the social consensus, and these questions cannot be answered by reasons. When such questions are posed, the only possible response is to say simply that you must decide for yourself what social system seems on the whole best to you, and then you must go to live in that society. The comparison of societies is a private matter that cannot really be reasoned about. The decision is finally personal.[2]

Henry David Aiken is also keenly aware that the process of ethical reasoning brings us to a point where decision becomes necessary. For Aiken, this point is reached at the "post-ethical" level, in his terminology.

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[1] Hare, p. 69.

[2] Stephen Toulmin, An Examination of the Place of Reason in Ethics (Cambridge: The University Press, 1950), p. 153.

> It is at this point, it seems to me, that the existentialists, for all their strange way of saying things, have really understood a fundamental fact of the moral life. When they speak of man's "freedom" in the moral situation, what they mean, I think, is that no purely logical or metaphysical "reason" can bind a man to any obligation whatsoever, that only by a gratuitous decision can one in the end ever answer the question, "Why should I be moral?"[1]

He continues by observing that men are bound by their commitments only as long as they are moved by them.

> No existential situation can compel my loyalty unless, for whatever reason or for no reason at all, I choose to be bound by it. Every situation, from the standpoint of my loyalty, is a new situation, every reaffirmation of past loyalties a new affirmation. If I choose, I may at any point refuse to abide by past loyalties. This is not an expression of disloyalty or of readiness to act thenceforth in an irresponsible way but rather a statement of the fundamental character of the moral situation itself. The continual possibility of rejection or indifference thus renders the authority of moral rules constantly dependent upon what I, as an agent, elect to be or do.[2]

In the end, he concludes, "Decision is king."

Finally, Paul Taylor also perceives the necessity for human choice at the end of the process of reasoning. Taylor conceives of theoretical justification as involving four steps, with the validity of each step finally depending upon the validity of the step above it. The first step is the verification of value judgments by appeal to standards or rules that we have adopted. These standards or rules must themselves be validated by appeal to higher standards or rules. Validation involves the decision to accept a whole value system. The acceptance of the value system must be vindicated by an appeal to the way of life to which we are committed, and this way of life must again be justified in terms of a rational choice among different ways of life. Although this choice of a way of life is a rational choice, which means that it is free, enlightened, and impartial, it is still a choice. If rational men disagree in their choices, it is impossible to determine which of two rationally considered choices is more justified. Taylor holds open the possibility that rational men will ultimately agree, but he does not feel that he can assert this with certainty. Of course, the final limit is reached when we ask why we should choose to choose rationally, for no further reason can be given for rationality, although, Taylor says, none needs to be given.[1]

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[1] Aiken, p. 86. [2] *Ibid.*, pp. 86-87.

The first similarity that I would observe between Brunner and the more rational noncognitivists is at the point of their emphasis on decision and choice. The word "decision" is a most important part of Brunner's vocabulary. One of the fundamental facts about man is that he is a being who must decide. The fact that man is man means that he must decide, "as long as he lives, and at every moment of his life" (MR, 264). Faith, which lies at the heart of the moral life, is the continually recurring fundamental decision to obey God. Faith exists only in the actuality of decision (MR, 50; DI, 80). Moreover, the believer is continually faced with particular moral situations requiring decision; he is always confronted with the necessity of deciding "in accordance with the command of God" in particular circumstances (DI, 92-93). Brunner thinks that the acknowledgment that true morality is nothing other than subjection to God is not something that can be proved to be self-evident scientifically. He says that proof belongs to the realm of the impersonal, whereas the moral is decidedly personal. Where proof rules, he says, there is nothing to decide; and where decision rules, there is nothing to prove. In other words, true morality is finally a matter requiring personal decision, a central personal act, which is the substance of faith (GE, 24-25).

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[1] Paul W. Taylor, Normative Discourse (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1961), pp. 77, 164-88.

To illustrate the nature of the decision about which Brunner speaks so often, I shall refer to some recent philosophical thought about the ethical force of role relations. From a purely secular, philosophical perspective, A. I. Melden argues that the role relation of father-son has moral implications. Melden argues that the assertion "You ought to do X for Y because Y is your father" is a perfectly valid assertion which does not require the additional premise, "and one ought always to act for the good of one's parent."[1] Likewise, Dorothy Emmet speaks of the moral evaluation built into certain social roles, such as the conviction that if A is the father of B, B has a duty to help A in his old age.[1] But Melden is quite clear that filial obedience follows from the factual statement "X is your father" only within a society in which the institution of parenthood is so constituted as to have the obligation built into it. The very words "father" and "son" have moral overtones which their bare definitions "male parent" and "male offspring" do not have. Emmet is equally aware that the obligations inherent in the role relation derive from a tacit and generally accepted evaluation of the social situation and a commitment to it.

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[1] A. I. Melden, Rights and Right Conduct (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1959), pp. 72-84.

> When the acceptance [of the social role] is tacit or taken for granted, the norms are likely to be seen simply as part of the facts of the situation. Where they are not taken for granted, a personal decision has to be made to accept or reject them.[2]

Thus when an ought follows from statements concerning roles, reference is being made to "value-acceptances" which the person in question can be presumed to hold, and the force of the ought is to recall a commitment to act in accordance with these value-acceptances.[3]

I do not wish to make too much of the obligations contained in role relationships, for this morality is a conventional morality resting on a decision for a particular social structure and a commitment to it. My point is simply that, assuming such a commitment to a social system in which certain roles are clearly established, acceptance of the obligations implied in the role relations is to be expected.

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[1] Dorothy Emmet, Facts and Obligations (London: Dr. Williams's Trust, 1958), pp. 8-10.

[2] *Ibid*., p. 11.

[3] *Ibid*., pp. 11-12.

Dewi Phillips proposes that the same kind of thinking can be applied to religious ethics.[1] Brunner might be interpreted in these terms, for faith is the acceptance of a role relationship with God, the relation of Lord-servant or Father-son. To believe means to become a captive of God, to become his bondslave. God is "absolute Supreme Lord," our Master and Lord. In faith, we cease to be our own masters and become servants of God (DI, 116-18, 173, 205). Brunner reminds us that the first Christian confession asserted, "Christ is Lord." To believe means "to have a Lord, a King, who really, that is, unconditionally without restriction, is King, an absolute Lord with no democracy" (M, 585-86). To admit the validity of the fact of revelation includes complete personal surrender to God (M, 43). Faith means the knowledge that I belong to another; it is coming into subjection through Jesus the Lord (D, III, 141). Faith is the knowledge of God's divine authority, his claim to Lordship (D, III, 168). Hence Brunner can say that faith is obedience; that is, faith is not really faith unless it results in obedience to the command of God (DI, 81). Given the centrality of Brunner's I-Thou personalism in his theology, it is not surprising that such personal role relations are the only appropriate categories for expressing the relation of God to man.

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[1] Dewi Z. Phillips, "God and Ought," Christian Ethics and Contemporary Philosophy, ed. Ian T. Ramsey (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1966), pp. 133-39.

> We cannot speak in the neuter, but only in the form of I-Thou: I thy Lord, thou my creature; Thou my father, I thy child. (TE, 24)

If this is the nature of the decision of faith, then as long as one continues to believe, he is committed to doing what God commands. As Phillips states the case, "To understand what it means to believe in God is to understand why God must be obeyed."[1] The decision of the Christian is an overriding commitment involving all of life. To reject God's claim is not merely the rejection of "one of many competing claims in a way of life; it is to reject a way of life as such."[2]

This line of argument suggests that certain moral judgments are rationally justified in some sense, given certain ethical decisions. Frankena considers the possibility that even if ethical judgments cannot be *logically* justified, there may be a larger sense of *rational* justification. He mentions John Stuart Mill's idea that there may be a larger meaning of the word "proof," which involves considerations "capable of determining the intellect either to give or withhold its assent...."[3] Frankena even suggests how this idea of non-logical but rational justification might be used by the theologian.

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[1] *Ibid.*, p. 136. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 139.

[3] Frankena, *Ethics*, p. 90, quoting John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism*.

> Theologians may also contend, however, that...if one fully believes or unquestionably experiences that God is love, then one must, if he is rational, conclude that he, too, should love. They may say that although this conclusion does not follow logically, it would be unreasonable for one to draw any other or refrain from drawing it. In this conclusion they may well be right. For all that I have said, I am inclined to think they are right.[1]

He goes on to insist, however, that even if the ethical principles of the theologian can be justified in such a way, it does not follow that they _must_ be justified in this manner, that is, it does not prove that all morality depends on religion, since the principles might also be justified in some other way.[2] I have already suggested that justification cannot be simply a matter of logical deduction. The theological should not argue for logical dependence, but rather for the kind of rational linkage of morality with religion which Frankena suggests.

For the man who by the decision of faith is firmly committed to the sovereignty of God, obedience to the command of God is only reasonable. As H. Richard Niebuhr observes, faith involves not only trust, but also loyalty or faithfulness.[3] It is only reasonable that the man who in the decision of faith commits himself to the Lordship of God should form his actions on the basis of what he perceives to be the will of God, and it would be unreasonable even if not logically contradictory for him to do otherwise. For the believer, the commitment of self to the rule of God is a fundamental decision somewhat similar to the fundamental decisions about which some noncognitivists speak. At some point in the process of giving reasons to justify ethical judgments, one must simply commit himself to a fundamental principle or to some social structure or cultural setting which is acceptable to him or seems reasonable to him, but for which no further reasons can be given. The Christian's decision of faith is just such an adoption of a whole way of life.

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[1] Frankena, _Ethics_, p. 85. [2] _Ibid_.

[3] H. Richard Niebuhr, "On the Nature of Faith," _Religious Experience and Truth_, ed. Sidney Hook (New York: New York University Press, 1961), pp. 98-99.

Frankena's assessment of even the less extreme noncognitivists, however, is that their position in the end results in a "kind of basic relativism," because the validity of their reasons for holding an ethical principle are finally relative to the individual or to his culture.[1] Even the theoretical justification that I have been suggesting for Brunner's ethic may appear to be subject to a kind of relativism, for in one sense the Lordship of Christ is a reality only where men actually "bow the knee" to him (D, II, 303). But Brunner's position does not involve a thoroughgoing relativism. Although God only really rules in the heart of the believer, his will also applies to the nonbeliever. Brunner claims more than that the _believer_ should obey the commands of God; he claims that the will of God or the command of God determines what is right for _all_ men. In the end, Brunner parts company with the relativism of the noncognitivists and asserts a more universal moral authority. Although God is Lord in the highest sense only when he is accepted as such in a free personal decision, he wills to be Lord of all men (TE, 95-96; COG, 58-59). Even though _de facto_ God rules only in the hearts of believers, he is _de jure_ the Lord of all men (D, I, 164). Thus Brunner is not merely asserting that those men who do believe that God is Lord ought to obey him. He is also saying that God is by his nature Lord in some objective sense, and that all men ought to acknowledge him as such and obey him. Only in faith is God _recognized_ as Lord (M, 608); only as we believe do we _know_ that we belong to him (DI, 116). But his being Lord does not depend upon our knowing it.

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[1] Frankena, Ethics, p. 91. In another context Frankena himself seems to imply that fundamental principles are entirely independent and can have no further justification, which seems to result in the same kind of relativism as that of the other contemporary philosophers whom he criticizes. Any attempt to justify any moral rule must begin with a basic moral principle. In that article, Harvard Educational Review, XXXI, p. 424, he continues by saying, "One may, of course, ask even in the case of such an ultimate moral principle, 'Why should I do what it enjoins?,' but then one is asking, not for a moral argument, but for motivation or some kind of non-moral argument."

But in his subsequent Ethics, pp. 95-96, Frankena suggests the kind of argument that he thinks can justify the basic moral principle. He proposes an ideal consensus of rational men as a satisfactory theoretical justification. In other words, he says that in claiming that an act is good we are claiming that all rational men aware of all the facts and not swayed by partiality and taking the moral point of view would choose that act.

> From the outset man is the property of God; he does not become God's property first of all by his self-determination. Self-determination ought only to accept that which already is, that which already exists. (MR, 265)

Although only the believer can really understand the Christian conception of the good, the Christian ethic claims a universal validity.

> Whatever God demands can only be universal, that is, valid for all men, even if those who do not hear this demand do not admit this validity, and indeed do not even understand the claim to universal validity. (DI, 89-90)

Brunner is, in effect, claiming that all men ought to be believers. God both wills to rule and ought to rule in the hearts of all men.

From the perspective of faith, the usual distinction between intuitionism and the more rational noncognitivism may be an unwarranted dichotomy. Those noncognitivists who focus on decision ground their fundamental ethical principles on commitments. The intuitionists, who appeal to the perception of ethical truth, are involved in a kind of knowledge claim. Many theologians, Brunner among them, would maintain that ethical and religious judgments involve both decision and commitment on the one hand and a claim to knowledge on the other. They would question the validity of a distinction between decision and knowledge. As I indicated in Chapter III, Brunner distinguishes between two kinds of truth, the truth of revelation and the truth of reason or faith. The validity of the truth of faith does not rest on the fact that it is believed or acknowledged, just as the validity of the truth of reason does not rest on the fact that it is known. But unlike the knowing process by which men arrive at rational knowledge, the truth of faith can only be recognized by one who is committed, that is, it is only perceived in the decision of faith (RR, 363).

> Outside this decision [to receive the Word of God] there is no true self-knowledge, no true knowledge of human existence. There is no theoretical and neutral knowledge of God and of the true man....To know God's Word means: to perceive and accept, and therefore to obey, the Lord's Word _as_ the Word of the Lord. (MR, 68)

In his analysis of the nature of faith, Niebuhr concludes that faith involves not only trust and loyalty but also a claim similar to a claim to knowledge, or a claim to a kind of knowledge.[1] Because the three types of theoretical justification that we have been considering do not allow for this convergence of decision and knowledge, they are not finally adequate for handling all the questions involved in Brunner's theoretical justification, though they are most useful in clarifying some issues in his thought.

God as the Source of Moral Value

Whether the theologian emphasizes the aspect of _decision_ or the claim to _knowledge_ or both, the problem of justifying the decision or the knowledge claim remains. In either case, the claims of the theologian are subjected to the challenge of Kai Nielsen, who revives a familiar philosophical argument to show that man's moral obligation cannot originate with the will of God.[2] One way of stating the argument is to begin with the question whether what God commands is good because he commands it, or whether he commands it because it is good. Brunner takes the former alternative, emphatically denying that there is a standard to which God conforms (D, I, 288). In several passages, Brunner explicitly says that what God commands is good simply because he commands it. The divine will is what makes the good "good." God has the "last word," and there are no other grounds for what he says than "His decision and His declaration of His will" (D, III, 201; DI, 58-59, 601). In a passage dealing with the Old Testament understanding of the good, Brunner elaborates upon his rejection of Nielsen's second alternative.

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[1] Niebuhr, _Religious Experience and Truth_, pp. 94-98.

[2] Nielsen, _Christian Ethics and Contemporary Philosophy_, pp. 140-51. See also "God and the Good: Does Morality Need Religion?" _Theology Today_, XXI (April, 1964), 47-58.

> What God does and wills is good; all that opposes the will of God is bad. The Good has its basis and its existence solely in the will of God. An idea like that in the religion of Zarathustra: that God became Lord because He chose the Good, the idea of a law which is even higher than God Himself is unthinkable in the Old Testament. God is not merely the guardian of the Moral Law and the moral ordinances, but their Creator. (DI, 53)

Commenting on this passage, Brunner quotes Cathrein to demonstrate that Thomism has been led away from the Biblical principle by "Aristotelian intellectualism" to the point of saying that God's holiness consists in his willing that which is good or right according to an eternal standard "with which the Divine Will agrees not freely but of necessity" (DI, 586). Brunner objects to any idea that would interfere with the sovereign freedom of God and would imply that there is a standard beyond God by which he is judged (D, I, 164).

But the alternative which Brunner seems to accept is impossible, Nielsen argues, because we cannot move logically from the statement "God wills X" to the moral judgment "We ought to do X." In order to know that we ought to do X, we would first have to know that the will of God is good. Of course, if we could know that God is good, then we could infer that what he wills is good and ought to be done. Thus the theologian might construct an argument on the basis of the logic of analytic implication. The argument could be stated as follows:

> If God is perfect goodness, then what he wills is good and ought to be done.
>
> God is perfect goodness; therefore, what he wills is good and ought to be done.

We can make the same point in another way by referring to the argument of D. A. Rees.[1] Rees says that it is paradoxical, within the usual framework of theistic belief, to say "God commands me to do X but I ought not to do it." Likewise, moral assertions which are not commands but which have moral relevance and from which commands can be derived are paradoxical if the moral implications of the statements are denied; for example, "God is love, but cruelty doesn't matter," or "God is the Father of all mankind, but it doesn't matter how you treat people." These statements are paradoxical because they are equivalent to saying, "That being who is perfectly wise and good (and therefore always right) commands me to do X, but I ought not to do it." Since Brunner does assert that God is good (DI, 53), it would seem that Brunner can assume that his command is good and obligatory.

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[1] D. A. Rees, "The Ethics of Divine Commands," Aristotelian Society Proceedings, N.S. LVII (1956-57), 83-106.

But, Nielsen would reply, such an argument gives the philosopher his point, for in order to know that God is perfect goodness, we must have a standard of goodness by which to judge that God is good. Nielsen states is argument in this fashion.

> We, as moral agents, form moral convictions and decide that such a Being must be good and his commands must be followed. But this is so not because he utters them but because God, being God, is good. But we have here used our own moral awareness and sensitivity to decide that God is *good* and that God *ought* to be obeyed.[1]

To translate this argument into the categories of Brunner's system, we could say that the decision of faith involves a decision that God is worthy of worship and obedience, but that this decision requires a standard of judgment or a sense of moral discernment prior to God's command and independent of it.

I suggest that Brunner could respond to Nielsen's argument in two ways. Nielsen himself hints at the first response. It may be that religious statements, or at least many of the most significant religious statements, are not morally neutral propositions but are also moral utterances. I am not proposing a reduction of all religious statements to purely moral statements, but I am saying that a moral element may be involved in making many or even most religious statements.[1] Certainly such statements as "God is Lord" include a moral element, but I think the same can be said in other less obvious cases as well, as I shall indicate shortly.

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[1] Nielsen, *Christian Ethics and Contemporary Philosophy*, p. 141.

The second response, based on an argument suggested by Richard Brandt, requires a preliminary digression. Brandt follows the general philosophical line that we have been observing. He agrees that a moral argument which derives a statement of moral obligation from a statement about the will of God does so by means of an intermediate moral premise, such as "We ought to obey God," which is not itself derived from a theological proposition.[2] His major point is that men do not need to know theological propositions in order to have moral knowledge, or, to put it another way, theological knowledge is not necessary for the justification of ethical statements. But Brandt says that his position does not foreclose the possibility that moral propositions "can somehow lead, logically, to theological propositions."

> Suppose that we hold--as we shall--that theological statements are not, in general, an essential part of ethical justifications. It is still open to us to say that ethics somehow commits us to a theology; at least

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[1] For an example of a recent attempt to reduce all religious statements to moral statements, see R. B. Braithwaite, "An Empiricists's View of the Nature of Religious Belief," Christian Ethics and Contemporary Philosophy, ed. Ian T. Ramsey (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1966), pp. 53-73.

[2] Brandt, Ethical Theory, p. 70.

> whether it does is still a question to be argued on its own merits. Some writers have held that we cannot explain how there are ethical facts at all unless there is a divine mind that somehow sustains or underlies such facts; it has also been argued that no area of facts can be independent of the divine nature, and hence that all facts must somehow point to God.[1]

Brandt says that he is not primarily interested in the question whether this argument from morality to theology can be established. His concern is only to make the epistemological point as distinct from the metaphysical point, that is, that one does not need to know theological truth in order to know ethical truth. But he says that his conclusion regarding the epistemological question need not rule out a "theological metaphysics."

As an example of a theologian who takes the line of attack that he describes, Brandt cites Dietrich von Hildebrand, who argues that moral values presuppose God's existence. Von Hildebrand agrees with Brandt's epistemological point; knowledge of God's existence is not necessary for acquiring ethical knowledge. But von Hildebrand does argue that the absoluteness and objectivity of the moral order points to the existence of God. He argues that only the existence of a "personal God who is Infinite Goodness can fulfill the message of moral values or can ultimately justify the validity of the obligation."[2] Brandt's statement of the possibility of a metaphysical or theological deduction might suggest a variation of the moral argument for the existence of God. It should be noted that Brunner emphatically rejects Ritschl's Kantian view of the relation of religion and morality because Brunner felt that this view made religion dependent upon morality (M, 58-59). Brunner might likewise respond that von Hildebrand's argument, at least as Brandt seems to interpret it, makes religion dependent on morality. But the point that von Hildebrand seems to make, and a point that Brandt may overlook in his argument, is that ultimately it is the metaphysical or theological "fact" which justifies the whole order. If we argue that morality presupposes religion, we are really arguing that morality is ultimately dependent upon religion, even if we feel that we must know moral truth before we can know God. The chronological order of knowing does not determine the logical order of priority and dependence.

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[1] Ibid., p. 64.

[2] Dietrich von Hildebrand, Christian Ethics (New York: David McKay Company, Inc., 1953), pp. 455-56.

We can hold that morality presupposes God and still grant the possibility of moral knowledge without metaphysical knowledge, so that the natural man who does not possess theological or metaphysical knowledge can still arrive at correct moral judgments. But if morality does presuppose God, then any full or "ultimate" theoretical justification of moral judgments would require reference to the metaphysical or theological presupposition. Brunner agrees at least in part with the "presupposition" argument, for he, too, says that God is the presupposition of our moral obligation and our responsible personal being (D, I, 141). He says that morality that does not depend ultimately upon religion degenerates into mere expediency.

The two responses which I have discussed seem to point toward a viable theory of the relation of religion and morality and hopefully reflect at least something of Brunner's own position. Of the two, the "presupposition" argument is the more important, for if it is accepted, then Nielsen's argument against the theist proves circular. If morality presupposes a God who maintains it, then the moral standard by which Nielsen tells us that we must judge God presupposes the existence of God as its source. Nielsen's argument thus presupposes what it is to prove. To prove that morality does not need God, he must assume the existence of an independent standard by which to judge God. But it is exactly the existence of such an independent standard that is at issue. Brunner would contest Nielsen's assumption that there is by saying that apart from God moral standards have no validity. I am not arguing that Brunner proves his point to the satisfaction of the philosopher. All I am saying is that Nielsen fails to prove his case because of the circularity of his argument.

With regard to the other response, I would suggest that most traditional religious language, or at least most Christian language, has a moral element built into it, not only in certain key religious statements, but even in the words themselves. The word "God," for example, has an ethical element which the phrase "an all-powerful being" does not have. Religious statements are also partly ethical statements. They are not purely descriptive statements, but also declarations of commitment. Nielsen, however, would counter as follows:

> If a religious utterance is not a moral utterance, no moral inferences can be derived from it; and if it is a moral utterance as well, it obviously does not license us to say that any moral beliefs at all are based on religion. In either event morality remains autonomous, though if all religious utterances were in part moral it would seem that religion is not itself independent of morality. The converse, however, would not be the case.[1]

Nielsen's first statement seems quite sound; if religious statements do not contain moral elements as elements in the key words and theological statements, then no moral inferences can be drawn from the religious statements alone. But this admission does not entail that moral utterances are independent. It could be that neither religion nor morality is independent; they could be interdependent. If the presupposition argument is correct, then these two elements are mutually dependent. True morality presupposes religious grounding for its validity, and true religion always involves morality. This idea of mutual dependence represents something of Brunner's own thought. He asserts that an ethic which claims to be autonomous, having no use for religion, is a profound misunderstanding of truth (D, I, 181). On the other hand, he says that religion is no more autonomous than is morality (DI, 54). He concludes that "the 'religious' element is also the 'ethical' element, and the 'ethical' is 'religious'" (DI, 54).

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[1] Nielsen, Christian Ethics and Contemporary Philosophy, p. 144.

To contend that all morality is grounded in God (D, I, 167) is to say that religion and morality are somehow related, proximately or remotely, but it does not necessarily mean that we must be aware of that connection in order to acquire moral knowledge. We might have moral perception sufficient for most practical purposes without knowing that God is the basis or ground of moral obligation. I indicated in Chapter III Brunner's understanding of the range and limits of such "natural" moral knowledge. Although some moral knowledge is possible without any knowledge of God, he thinks that "genuine" morality and even a full account of "natural" morality requires an awareness that God is the source of all moral value. But a full account of all truth requires such a reference to God. A description of the physical universe sufficient for purposes of prediction and scientific explanation is certainly possible without any reference to God, but a complete account of the basis of the whole natural order must involve a reference to God as its source. According to Brunner, God is the presupposition and ground of all knowledge of truth (RR, 318). He is the origin of truth and beauty and the source of the moral order, the source of "all that is and all that ought to be" (DI, 114). Even the truth that is acquired by reason is derived from God (D, I, 282; JSO, 91). But, of course, it is the assertion that God is the source of moral value that is important in the debate with Nielsen.

> All truth is divine truth, all good is divine good, all value is posited and given by God, all law is His law, every norm is the expression of His thought and will. But while the Person of the God who speaks disappears from our sight when we withdraw ourselves from His Word by setting up our own thoughts and acting in self-will, the truth which He posits, the values which He gives, the laws and norms which express His will do not entirely disappear. (MR, 245)

If Brunner is correct, Nielsen may still have a valid point, but it is, as Brandt would say, an epistemological point, not a metaphysical one. Perhaps our moral knowledge does chronologically precede our knowledge of God. We may indeed make a prior moral commitment or have prior moral discernment by which we judge that God is good and therefore worthy of our worship and obedience. I doubt that our experience is nearly so clear cut chronologically, for it seems that our views of the good and our views about the nature of God are continually interacting, with ethical commitments constantly reshaping our theological ideas and our theological ideas reflexively affecting our ethical views. Rees thinks that this mutually reflexive influence is at work in our experience.

> If we ask for the ratio cognoscendi of the divine command instead of the ratio essendi, we may find both that we want to say that we are sure that an action is right because we are sure that God commanded it, and that we are sure that God commanded it because we are independently sure it is right....The independent appeal to divine authority is likely to have most influence in cases where we find ourselves in serious moral doubt.[1]

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[1] Rees, Aristotelian Society Proceedings, N.S. LVII, 91.

But Nielsen is at least partly right epistemologically, for we probably do have some sense of good and evil that is chronologically prior to our knowledge that God is good, just as we have some sense of the normal human meanings of words like "person" or "love" or "truth" before we apply them to God. But we should not think that we are judging God by human standards. The fact that we can only begin thinking about God in terms of human experience merely means that human knowledge is experientially prior to knowledge of God, not that human knowledge is logically prior to divine truth. I should like to quote at some length a passage that indicates Brunner's agreement with my general line of argument.

> When we assert, "The Word of God is 'true,' God reveals Himself as 'the Good,'" at first sight this seems to mean that we can define God, and His acting or speaking, by means of predicates that are already at our disposal. Thus by definite norms that are known to us of the true and the good, God's action and His speech are measured, and then sanction is given to that which is found in agreement with these norms. This state of affairs, which from the outset looks highly suspicious, proves on closer examination to be a deception produced by language. For what we usually call "our" standard, "our" norm, is in reality the truth of God and the norm of God. The ideas of truth and justice, which enable us apparently to summon God to appear before the bar of our judgment, are, in reality, a reflection of His own Being; the idea of truth is simply the way in which God Himself, at all times, in all our mental acts, makes Himself felt as their hidden norm. "In Thy Light shall we see light"; in His truth we can understand and use what is true and false--we can see the meaning of this distinction. Thus when we speak of God as "just," "good," "true," we are not placing Him under a law outside Himself, but we are referring to the law of His own nature, which is the source of our ideas of truth and of the good. (RR, 313-14)

I began this section by asking whether God's will makes something good or whether he wills it because it is good, and I quoted passages from Brunner to show that he took the former alternative. These passages express a strongly voluntaristic conception of God, emphasizing the will of God as the source of the good. The ideas of the will of God and the God who wills are quite important for Brunner. The will and the action of God have to do with God's relation to the world; and a basic premise of Brunner's theology is that we know God primarily as he is related to the world. Brunner's emphasis on the will of God and the acts of God is intended to avoid any notion of a static God (D, I, 161). "The Being of God which His Name makes known to us can never be grapsed by neutral categories of existence. He is Will" (D, I, 159).

> What God wills--the sovereignty of God--is the foundation of all true morality; conversely, all morality which is directed towards the good of our neighbor has its basis and its deepest motive in obedience to the Will of God. (D, I, 161)

But the idea of God's willing something because it is good is not the only alternative to its being good because he wills it. It may also be that God wills the good because he is good. It has often been objected that the assertion that something is good because God wills it, which characterizes the tradition of nominalism, makes morality subject to the capricious and arbitrary command of God and is therefore an offense against morality. But if the will of God is seen as being consistent with his being, so that capricious and arbitrary commands are inconceivable in God, then the objection loses its force.

When Brunner rejected Cathrein's position because it interfered with the freedom of God, he did not observe the difference between the "necessity" of external compulsion and the inner necessity of God's own being. But he should have noticed this difference, for his own position is not entirely foreign to it. Despite all his emphasis on the free will of God, Brunner's real position is more closely related to the third alternative which I suggested than it is to extreme voluntarism. God wills the good because he is good. Brunner knows that God is a consistent God, not a capricious and arbitrary being.

> The Law is the manifested Will of the Lord God: eternally the same, self-consistent, unchangeable. The truth that this Will of God is a free, personal will is not more important than the other truth, that it is God's unchangeable, inviolable Will....All order, all significance, all beauty, all trustworthiness, all constancy, all fidelity and all faith, all truth and all good, are based both upon the Law, which constitutes the intrinsic content of His Will, and upon this unconditional self-manifestation in which the Law is rooted. "God cannot repeal His Law," says Luther. God cannot cease for one second to will to maintain His purpose unconditionally; if He were to cease to will for one instant the universe would collapse, unimaginable chaos would reign. The world is based upon the fact that this Will, this holy, personal Will cannot be altered. (M, 461)

Not only is God's will unchangeable, but his willing is also consistent with his nature. God never wills anything contrary to love (DI, 196).

Despite his emphatic stress on this issue, Brunner never clarifies the problem of the relation of the will and being of God, and he often seems to use "will" and "being" interchangeably. Immediately after saying that the good has no other ground than God's own decision and his declaration of his will, Brunner refers to the grounding of the good in "the eternal will and being [emphasis added] of God" (D, III, 201). Likewise, in another important passage, Brunner refers to the "Being" of God as the source of the good and the true; and in this passage, God's will is not mentioned at all, but only the "law of His own nature" (RR, 313-14). Thus Brunner does not seem to stress the free will of God to such an extent that he is led to assert that God is not bound by the law of his own nature. He does not seem entirely at variance with the long theological tradition that grounds the goodness of what God wills in the assumption that God is good by nature.

The point that should be made, and one which may reflect Brunner's position although he does not explicitly express it, is that God's willing is consistent with his nature but is not determined by his nature. In other words, there may be several options open to God, all of which are consistent with his nature. The choice among these alternatives is left to the free, sovereign will of God. God's will is not determined by his nature, but the range of possibilities is circumscribed by the "necessity" of his nature.

Brunner's Theological Metaethic

I began this chapter by letting philosophy provide the categories for the analysis of Brunner's thought, and I have given, I hope, an accurate exposition of the logical response that Brunner can give to the philosopher's queries. In one sense the kind of interpretation that I have attempted is true to the spirit of Brunner, for he is concerned to answer the philosopher and to engage in apologetics, or eristics, as he prefers to designate it. But it might be objected that I have been too willing to accept the starting point of the philosopher. I have myself suggested that Brunner's metaethic cannot finally be understood within the range of the current philosophical discussion. In order to interpret him properly on his own ground, let us conclude this examination of the metaethical level by considering Brunner's own starting point.

As I have already indicated, Brunner thinks that the only proper starting place for theology is revelation. God is known only as he makes himself known. And the personal God reveals himself as one who is Lord.

> God does not define His Nature: He does not teach us about His Nature. He addresses us as One who is Himself, and this address which begins with "I" is in itself the revelation. The theological doctrine of God, therefore, must not begin with the effort to make an abstract definition of the Nature of God, but with the description of this majestic "I, the Lord, thy God." (D, I, 137)

Brunner does not arrive at this conclusion or seek to support it by rational argument. All dogmatic reflection must start from the understanding that God is absolute Lord, not from a neutral definition of deity (D, I, 138). Theology is reflection about revelation, but revelation is that fundamental experience, the encounter with God, in which a man knows not only that there is a God, but that he is the Lord. Assuming this starting point, Brunner says, the doctrine of God involves a unity of the metaphysical and the ethical.

> The Being of God as Lord, if we must use this somewhat dubious distinction at all, is both metaphysical and ethical. Metaphysically speaking, it is the ONE WHO IS who alone gives existence to all other forms of being. Ethically speaking, it is the will of the Lord from which every kind of ethos is derived. (D, I, 150)

The good is rooted solely in the Sovereign Lord God.

Closely related to the Lordship of God is the second point, that God is the Holy One (D, I, 163). God in himself is the Holy One: Brunner distinguishes between the nature of God as he is in himself and the attributes of God, which express God's nature as it works itself out and is made known in the world which he created, and he thinks that Holiness is the nature of God as he is in himself (D, I, 247). In the first instance, Holiness has no ethical connotations but points to God's transcendence, the "wholly other-ness" of God (D, I, 158). On the one side, this means an emphasis on the Glory of God and his will to be glorified. On the negative side, it means Holy Wrath where his Glory is not acknowledged (D, I, 160-62).

Although the Holy can be understood entirely apart from the moral, in a second sense the two are necessarily related. God's Holiness is his will to possess his creatures; therefore his Holiness is the will to reveal himself.

> God is the God of revelation; He is the One who seeks man, the God who wants to have man for Himself, the God whose very nature it is to be sovereign Will. It is part of the very Nature of God as the Holy One that He is concerned to be known by His creatures, and to possess them in a qualified sense as His own possession, that is, as creatures who recognize Him as their Lord. (D, I, 165)

Thus the connection between Holiness and Lordship and between these two and the moral becomes evident. The Good is based on the Holy (DI, 53). In fact, Brunner seems to use Good and Holy interchangeably: "The Good in the ethical sense is the same as the Holy" (DI, 188). But what Holiness involves beyond the moral is sovereignty: "The Holy means God, as the unconditional sovereign Lord of the world" (DI, 53, 117-18).

In some passages, Brunner seems to say that it is the power of God that establishes his moral claim on us. "Because God has absolute power, He has the absolute right over us" (D, I, 141). Brunner's rather Biblicistic interpretation of the Wrath of God seems to provide, in other words, not only a sanction for obedience, but sometimes even its rational basis as well. Taken at face value, this kind of suggestion raises a serious problem. Raw power does not establish any moral claim. It might be prudent to obey the commands of an arbitrary, capricious, and all-powerful deity, especially if his commands were issued on the threat of destruction in hell for the disobedient. But if we did not feel that the deity was also a good being, the source of goodness as well as the source of power, we would not feel that his demands created a moral claim.

Power per se does not establish a moral claim, and I think that such statements from Brunner are unfortunate, since they are so easily misunderstood. But in context I think it is clear that such statements do not assume that arbitrary power establishes a moral claim. Elsewhere Brunner explicitly denies that "arbitrary and violent" power is the basis of "real authority" (GE, 26). It is not simply the fact of power but the fact that it is the power of the Creator that gives God his right over us. He is the power from whom all other power is derived, and we belong to him because he, as Absolute Power, has created us (DI, 142). One way in which Brunner describes the claim of the Creator is by the use of "property" imagery. Brunner asserts that man is God's property, that man belongs to God, because God has created him (DI, 116; MR, 265; OF, 53; D, I, 164).

But we may still want to ask, How does the fact that God has created man give God a claim over him? How does God's creation of man make man God's property? The first response that must be given to these questions is that the word "Creator," like many other theological words, is not ethically neutral, but includes the suggestion that God is Creator in such a way that his activity of creation posits a moral bond between him and his human creatures. Brunner certainly wants to assert that at least the epistemological order does not move from the bare fact of physical genesis to the recognition of a moral claim. Man knows God as Creator only as a result of first knowing him as Lord (RR, 44).

> We do not first of all know that God is Creator, and then, on the basis of this knowledge, acknowledge his sovereignty as Lord; but, because He manifests Himself to us as the absolute Lord, we know both truths at once: His unconditional claim (the Ideal) and His absolute power, His being as Creator (the Actual). (D, I, 142)

The idea of Creation and the idea of Lordship are inseparably united. "As Creator God is our absolute Lord and the Lord of all existence" (DI, 123).

For Brunner the notion of creation has already a moral element, because the creation of man was the creation of responsible creatures. The assertion that God is Creator is not a "theoretical statement about the way in which the world came into existence, but it is primarily a statement about our unconditional responsibility" (D, I, 142). Brunner's metaethic involves, then, a certain understanding of the nature of God and also a definite view of the nature of man. Because man is a responsible being, he cannot be understood in isolation, for responsibility is obviously a relation (D, II, 59). According to Brunner, responsibility is always responsibility toward God: "When we speak of responsibility, we speak of God; apart from God, responsibility is an empty phrase" (RR, 55). We cannot account for man's responsibility from man's perspective, but only by a reference to God.

Man's nature as subject, that is, as one who can be addressed, and his responsibility are two defining characteristics of man, which distinguish him from the animals (NG, 23). To be human is to be responsible, and this means being related to the Creator who makes men responsible.

> Our responsibility can only be based on the Divine claim. When we say that God has so created us that this claim of the "Thou" is our very life, and thus that we have been created in His image, we mean that this responsibility is not an extra, alien element in life, but that it constitutes our human life itself--(and we have no other life than a human life)--we mean that we have not been posited, as things are posited, but that we have been created in such a manner that only as we respond to this claim upon us do we fulfill the purpose for which we have been created. (DI, 295)

Brunner may be guilty of confusion in this treatment. We may wonder whether he grants enough independence to the humanity of man. To be sure, the relationship of creation and the relationship of responsibility are connected, but they are not necessarily identical. Although it is the claim of the Creator that makes man responsible, this claim seems separable from the creation itself. Does not man have to be man in order to be claimed by God? Is not the call of God logically subsequent to the being, and thus the creation of man? It would seem that it is the capacity of man to be called, to be made responsible, that is given in creation, not the responsibility itself.

In any case, Brunner goes on to say that it was the Creator's purpose in creation that man should respond to him in love. It was his will to create free agents genuinely distinct from him, not merely extensions of his will, but capable of genuine response to him. Without this freedom, there is no real response and no real communion. And Brunner asserts that men continue to be aware of their responsibility even when they are living in contradiction, because God continues to claim them. The Creator continues to call men, and this summons ensures man's responsibility (TE, 53-54). Brunner asserts that all men are aware of their responsibility, for it is the distinctively human feature which man cannot evade or cast aside (MR, 157-59, 170). The natural man, when he rebels against God, does not become either an animal or a devil; he remains a responsible person (DI, 155). If a human being lost all sense of responsibility, he would cease to be human (MR, 51); but man is always man, i.e., a responsible being, because he is always in relation to God, either positively or negatively (RR, 54). Sinful man continues to have a vague awareness of his responsibility and a dim awareness that his responsibility has a source beyond himself and his own conscience. He has a vague sense that he is responsible to a God beyond himself.

But who is the God who continues to call man and thereby makes him responsible? Putting it in terms of the dichotomy in Brunner's doctrine of God, is it the God of

Grace, the God of the covenant who in Jesus Christ makes himself known as Redeemer, as the God of love? Or is it God the Creator who makes men responsible? There are passages in which Brunner seems to say that it is the God of the covenant that calls men to responsibility. Sometimes he asserts that the responsibility of man is based on election (MR, 77-78). Or he asserts that it is knowledge of the Word of God that is the basis of responsibility (MR, 68). Or again he says that man is responsible because he hears the voice and claim of God, and this does not mean the demand of the Creator through the orders but the personal call of God. Brunner says that I am only an "I," a responsible being, because, and in so far as, God addresses me as a "thou" (DI, 153, 295; CC, I, 94).

> Man's relation to God is based on God's covenant with man; it is therefore a bond of loyalty. God does not make His sovereign rights over man felt as a blind force. He makes his claim felt on the basis of the fact that He has first of all graciously addressed him. Man's goodness can be no other than a response to the the prevenient kindness of God. (DI, 54)

Brunner asserts that our responsibility and our knowledge of our personal dignity spring from God's calling, from his self-revelation (D, I, 141). Every man is related to God and hence is responsible because of his creation "through the Word" (MR, 456).

> The distinctive quality of my existence, responsibility, only consists in the fact that I am addressed by God. I am not merely causally "derived from God" like all other creatures, but I am also "derived from God" in the sense that I alone know that I come from God, and that I can only really become a person when I know that I am destined for God, and can choose to accept this destiny. (DI, 153)

But there are other passages, as Barth observes in his criticism of Brunner,[1] which indicate that it is not the call of the God of the covenant that makes man responsible, but the summons of the Creator. It is, of course, ultimately the one God who calls man, but Brunner clearly distinguishes the activities of the one God. Sometimes he seems to be saying that the Creator makes himself sufficiently known in his creation, by virtue of the imprint that he leaves on what he creates, so that man is left without excuse. Brunner implies that to some extent men can be aware of God in the created physical world. But it is primarily in his own createdness that man becomes aware of God, that is, in man's own self-awareness of his responsibility and his awareness of the law of God which he recognizes in his conscience (NG, 25). Brunner calls this awareness general revelation. Most theologians would call it natural knowledge.

In his discussion of the image of God Brunner says that sinful man loses what Brunner calls the "material" image of God, the proper orientation of his life by love, but retains the "formal" image, which provides the point of contact. Man must continue to be man despite his sin, or else he would not be able to perceive the word of God. But the fact that man is still man, that he still possesses the formal image of God and hence the possibility of receptivity, says nothing about man's acceptance or rejection of God's call. It is the purely formal possibility of being addressed (NG, 31). Brunner asserts that sinful man by his own thought can reach the point of affirming his responsibility and his guilt, but he can go no further; he can neither explain nor comprehend the source of his responsibility (D, III, 257).

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[1] Karl Barth, Church Dogmatics, III/2 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1960), pp. 128-32.

In the end we must simply conclude that Brunner is never clear about how it is that God approaches man in general revelation. In one important passage he insists upon the ultimate unity of God's action and says that in general revelation we have to do with the Redeemer, the eternal Word. But, he continues, the Word does not meet man personally in general revelation, but impersonally (RR, 75-76). It is not clear what is the nature of this impersonal meeting. If Brunner means that God only makes himself known as Law, as many passages might suggest, then Brunner is involved in a real theological problem. If responsibility is a relationship between persons, as Brunner has insisted it is, then a purely impersonal revelation of law can hardly serve to account for man's responsibility. But if this is not what he means by "impersonal," then it is simply not clear what he does mean.

In any case Brunner seems to have erred in identifying man's responsibility with the formal image of God. What would seem more likely is that the formal image of God only maintains the possibility of man's being addressed. This would mean that it does not constitute responsibility, at least before God, but only the possibility of that responsibility; and the responsibility can be twofold, based either on natural or on revealed knowledge of God's will. Ultimately, the problem with Brunner's view of responsibility can be traced to the same source as so many of the other ethical problems--the lack of clarity in the dichotomy in his doctrine of God. Because Brunner is never clear on the issue of the relation of the different activities of God to the doctrine of the unity of God, he is unable adequately to explain how it is that sinful man remains responsible to the Personal God.

We must therefore conclude that Brunner has finally failed to arrive at a clear account of the nature of human responsibility. But he seems at least to have located the point at which a theological metaethic must begin, and he has given some specification of the kinds of considerations that must be treated. Such a theological metaethic lies beyond the range of most philosophical discussions of metaethics. To the extent that the non-cognitivist philosophers whom I have mentioned take metaethical reflection up to that point where a decision of principle or a choice of a way of life becomes necessary, they have led us up to that point where the most important theological task begins. The choice of a way of life, whether in a religious or a secular context, involves a view of the world and of man, which theology asserts can only be viewed rightly with reference to God. Such a world view is necessarily involved in this fundamental decision, even if it is not articulated in any systematic way. Brunner's theological metaethic is one attempt to explain the nature of man and the source of his responsibility. It appeals to a source of knowledge beyond that available to man's reason; that is, it appeals to the knowledge of revelation, which is appropriated by the decision of faith.

The philosopher may object to this appeal to faith and revelation as irrational and circular. Brunner would respond that the appeal to faith is not irrational but suprarational. It is not based on a rational principle, but this does not mean that it precludes the possibility of rational reflection on the basis of faith. As to the circularity of a theological metaethic, Brunner would perhaps respond that all argument is ultimately circular, in the sense that all systems of philosophy and all metaethics must finally be based on something like faith, whether it is known by its Christian name or is expressed in the vocabulary of first principles or axioms. Indeed, it is precisely to this conclusion that one seems to be led by the noncognitivists whom we have considered.

It is, of course, possible to attempt to trace the logic of Christian theology back beyond the point where I have left it. I have left the case where I think Brunner leaves it, with a view of God and man which is charged with moral valence, a view which Brunner asserts can only be achieved and must be achieved in an encounter with God. To accept Brunner's interpretation of who man is and who God is is to make a "religious-moral" commitment, for there are no morally neutral statements about the God of Jesus Christ. The religious and the moral are ultimately united, for God is the source of all truth, and in God all truth is finally related. To understand this about God is to know why he must be obeyed.

Philosophers and theologians may wish to get behind this kind of interpretation to ask about the meaningfulness of this kind of religious language or about the reasonableness of this kind of faith, or about the criteria by which we can judge a "Divine-human" encounter to be a genuine encounter providing genuine knowledge. But Brunner denies, of course, that we can get behind the final reference to revelation.

The problems lying beyond Brunner's own theological starting point cannot be pursued further in the context of the present study of Brunner. I can merely conclude by saying that Brunner's metaethic stands or falls with his whole theology, which of course assumes that the theological enterprise itself is a legitimate discipline and that revelation is the proper place to begin a theology.

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